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Description Map|Directions Photos View All

Embracing the Freedom of the Frontier

In 1862, the United States Congress passed the Homestead Act in an effort to move people into their newly acquired territory of the American West. Born in Arkansas around 1874 to educated and wealthy parents, Josie was only three years old when she and her mother- ambitious, independent, strong-willed Elizabeth-and her mild-mannered father, Herb, packed their belongings and made the journey west by wagon. They homesteaded in an area called Brown's Park, only 40 miles from the Cub Creek site that Josie homesteaded independently later in life. As a child in Brown's Park, Josie contributed her part of the household and ranch chores. Once these duties were complete, young Josie was free to play in the surrounding wilderness with her four siblings. The children grew up having an intimacy with and dependence on the natural environment, forming values based on hard work and resourcefulness. Josie's family hosted many guests in their home, including some outlaws like Butch Cassidy, which fostered in Josie a strong sense of hospitality, generosity, and community.

A Progressive Style of Womanhood

The women of Josie's family were not only pioneers of the west, but also represented a progressive style of womanhood. Josie married five times and she divorced four husbands, in a time when divorce was almost unheard of. For this, Josie, with her strong will, charm, and independence, garnered rumors about her throughout most of her life. Josie was universally admired, however. Living such a remote and rugged lifestyle, women were respected if they could work alongside the cowhands and run an efficient ranch, in addition to being feminine.

With no money to buy property, Josie decided in 1913 to homestead again – this time in Cub Creek. Here she built her own cabin and lived for over 50 years. She shared her home with

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7/27/23, 9:33 PM |Josie Bassett Morris Homestead her son Crawford and his wife for a time; grandchildren spent summers working and playing alongside Josie.

The Pioneer West in Modern Age

Raised on the frontier, Josie lived into the modern era of electronics. For friends and acquaintances in the 1950s, Josie was a link to a world past. During Prohibition in the 1920s and into the 1930s, Josie brewed apricot brandy and chokecherry wine. After a lifetime of dressing in skirts, she switched to wearing pants in her later years. She was tried and acquitted twice for cattle rustling when she was in her 60s. At the age of 71, in an ambitious move to revive a profitable cattle business, she deeded her land away and lost all but the five acres where her cabin still stands. In December of 1963 the legendary Josie suffered a broken hip while in her cabin, she died of complications in May of 1964.

#### Josie's Homesite Today

Today Josie's cabin would be considered a modest structure. It is hard to imagine this place as a hub of activity, a site where an individual poured heart and soul into endless hours of chopping wood, cooking meals, milking cows, entertaining guests, and tending the chicken coop and vegetable garden. Look closer at the walls and envision a bed where Josie slept through bitter cold nights. Breathe in and imagine the rich aroma of Josie's homebrewed coffee and homemade biscuits. Envision how it would have been to a guest at the generous hostess' table. Take a moment to sit in the shade of the trees surrounding Josie's cabin – trees she carefully planted to provide the shade and fruit necessary for survival in a harsh environment. Walk the short trail to the box canyon where Josie penned her livestock; the wooden fence still stands. Imagine living in this place without plumbing, electricity, or neighbors for over fifty years. Relax and let the stillness enchant you; it is the same peacefulness that Josie may also have felt here.

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#### The Bassett Women

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#### PREFACE

A good share of Western history is oral, based on stories of the old-timers passed from neighbor to neighbor and from one generation to the next. As

these stories reached the printed page, they were only as reliable as the people who told them. The story of the Bassett women has been almost smothered under a blanket of these half-true legends. Seemingly, at times the truth about them and their neighbors in Brown's Park has been deliberately distorted for the sensationalism that sells most readily to the tabloids. They have become almost unrecognizable over the years. Like other Western writers, I have relied heavily on oral interviews to guide my research in the courthouses, libraries and newspaper files of Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. As I conducted interviews with the family and friends of the Bassett family, I promised no whitewash (nor did they ask for one) but only a balanced and authenticated account, substantiated by printed facts wherever possible. My first inkling of the distortion of the Bassett story came from Amy MacKnight Lube of Vernal, Utah, when she characterized her notorious grandmother Josie Bassett Morris as a "little brown wren." Our first interview was painful: I was uneasy at bringing up family history which might be embarrassing to her, and she viewed my tape recorder and notebook with suspicion, knowing the damage caused by other would-be reporters. Our later friendship and understanding is a source of great pleasure to me. Through Amy Lube I met and interviewed her parents, Flossie and Crawford MacKnight of Jensen, Utah, and her brother and sisters: Frank McKnight of Vernal; Betty Eaton of Craig, Colorado; Belle Christenson of Encampment, Wyoming; Dorothy Burnham of Bountiful, Utah; and Jane Redfield of Salt Lake City. The life blood of this book came from the MacKnight family, and my gratitude is profound for their endless courtesy and patience. \* \*The seeming discrepancy in spelling the family name which appears in this paragraph will appear throughout the book. Crawford always insisted on the Scottish "MacKnight." All others, even his son Frank, held to the "McKnight" used by Crawford's father.

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I interviewed three other members of the Bassett family: Elizabeth Bassett's granddaughter, Edna Bassett Haworth of Grand Junction, Colorado; Arthur "Art" McKnight of Vernal, not a blood relative but the son of Josie's first husband by a later marriage; and Edith McKnight Jensen, widow of Josie's younger son, Chick. Other people to whom I talked and from whom I received material will be named in other sections of this book or in the notes at its end, but special mention should be made of three contemporaries of the Bassett sisters. First and foremost is Esther Campbell of Vernal. Although younger than Josie and Ann, she was a close friend to both of them in their later years. Her recollections of them, her collection of their personal letters to her, and her voluminous files of written material have been invaluable. Then there is Hugh Colton, a Vernal attorney still in practice. He was not a personal friend of Josie, but his recollections are one of the high points of my story. Mr. Colton referred me to Joe Haslem of Jensen, Utah, who knew both Josie and Ann, and who has earned the right of a good neighbor to speak of the sisters' faults as well as their

virtues. Much important material comes from the sisters themselves. In her old age, Josie taped several interviews with the personnel at Dinosaur National Monument, who kindly opened their files to me. Josie's own descriptions of her childhood, her neighbors, and some of the more lurid episodes in Brown's Park history have given the spark of life and authenticity to what others have said about her and her family. Ann Bassett Willis has left even more material, for she turned to writing in her later years. The most accessible of her memoirs is the autobiography entitled "Queen Ann of Brown's Park" which appeared serially in 1952 and '1953 in *The Colorado Magazine*, the official publication of the State Historical Society of Colorado. The beginning chapters of another book, *Scars and Two Bars*, were published in *The Moffat Mirror* of Craig, Colorado, in the 1940s, and many of her letters and fragments of unpublished material are still in existence. Ann's writings are a mixture of truth and fiction. She idealizes and embroiders upon her childhood in the interests of a good story. I have felt more comfortable with Ann's stories when I have been able to find corroboration for them, and have used discretion in quoting her material. A story based on tradition and hearsay should be presented for just what it is—a story of ordinary people who played extraordinary roles in the settlement of the west. The story does not lend itself to the precise and scholarly footnotes that are possible in biographies of persons who lived extensively in the public eye. Rather than clutter the text with source references, I have described the origins of my information in more generalized chapter notes at the end of the book. x

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I make no apologies for my speculations as to the motives, inner thoughts, and reactions of my characters. These are based on a certain amount of logic and an equal amount of intuition. This intuition comes almost automatically after many months of research and "Bassett talk" with a variety of people, some of whom loved the Bassett women, some of whom disapproved, and others who withheld judgment. As we talked, a shrug of the shoulder, a slight hesitation, an outpouring of emotion, or a side-stepping of a question gave me valuable clues. The research for this book was pleasure. In the following months of the drudgery of putting it on paper, I was sustained and assisted by the editing and comments of my son Stephen McClure, my daughter-in-law Judith Flagle McClure, and my friend Marië Creager. Joseph D. Wells of Northridge, California, generously shared his editorial and publishing expertise. My debt to them is surpassed only by my gratitude to William L. Tennent of the Museum of Western Colorado and Dr. Gene M. Gressley of the University of Wyoming, not only for their willingness to check my book for historical accuracy but also for their enthusiasm and encouragement. During the pre-publication period I have been supported magnificently by the Ohio University Press/ Swallow Press editorial staff. However, they threw me into panic when they asked me for a map. My final thanks will go to Fred Tinseth, who rescued me with his imaginatively conceived and painstakingly executed drawing of Brown's Park and the surrounding countryside.

GRACE MCCLURE Tucson, Arizona November 1984

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## INTRODUCTION

In the towns along the tracks of the Union Pacific Railroad in southern Wyoming, and down in the cattle country in Colorado and Utah, the locals still tell stories about the Bassetts. And when they do, they are talking about the Bassett women, those unorthodox and controversial Bassett women, compared to whom the Bassett men are almost shadows. There were three of these women: the original pioneer, Elizabeth, and her two daughters, Josie and Ann. Elizabeth Bassett is remembered as "head of the Bassett gang." Ann was first called "Queen of the Cattle Rustlers" by a Denver newspaper reporter, and she was known as "Queen Ann" forever after, partly because of her notoriety but also because her imperious ways and her regal bearing made the name a fitting one. The other daughter, Josie, gained her notoriety another way: in a time when divorce was almost unheard of among decent people, she acquired and discarded five husbands, at least one of whom she was suspected of killing. Still, Josie might now be forgotten except that, when almost forty years old, she piled her possessions into a wagon with a spare horse tied to its tailgate and left her childhood home in Brown's Park to establish a homestead of her own. She found that homestead near Jensen, Utah, only forty miles away as the crow flies, but actually in almost another land because of the ruggedness and wildness of the intervening mountains. Josie lived there until her death almost fifty years later. As those years passed, she acquired the respectability of age (despite the stories still told about her) through the sheer strength of her personality, her generosity, her unaffected sense of humor, her companionability, and her stubborn insistence on living the way she wanted to. In her very old age she was as much a legend to the people of her countryside as was her sister Ann. The Bassetts were early pioneers in a section of northwestern Colorado belonging topographically to the Wyoming Basin, a high arid land of broad plains, undulating hills and occasional outcrop pings of rock. This vast, irregular bowl is bordered by high mountain ranges with snowy peaks and thick pine forests; within its boundaries it is divided again and again by lower ranges of bare brown mountains only occasionally relieved by the stunted cedars which

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grow in country where water is scarce. There is infinite variety in this land of canyons, mesas, ridges, peaks and mountains; there is also infinite monotony in the coloration of its brown grasses, dusty green sagebrush and sober-toned rock. It is magnificently and grimly beautiful. In its bareness and brownness the skeleton of the earth seems revealed. The Wyoming Basin was the last frontier in "cattle country," which extended as far south as Texas and as far east as Kansas and the Dakotas. In the late 1870s when the Bassetts arrived, the land west of the Rockies in Colorado was still reserved for the Ute Indians,

and they lived there comparatively undisturbed by the white invaders. Their displacement was inevitable, of course, once the railroad linking the continent was built. The Utes fought their last battle in 1879. Even before 1879, and well into the twentieth century, the white invaders were fighting among themselves. They were divided into two groups: the large cattle barons, who dominated those endless square miles of grassland by the sheer size of their herds, and the small ranchers, who sought to establish and maintain smaller herds in the lands immediately surrounding their homesteads. All these cattlemen, large and small, broke the laws of more settled communities because laws had not been written to fit the circumstances under which both groups fought for survival. In and among these "honest" lawbreakers, another group inhabited that vast country—the outlaws, the "professional" lawbreakers, who committed their crimes almost with impunity because the law was represented only in a scattering of barely emerging towns. By happenstance, the Bassetts settled in the only valley in northwestern Colorado that could assure them a place in the folklore of the region. They filed their homestead claim in Brown's Park, then known as Brown's Hole, a small valley only thirty-five miles long and roughly six miles wide, surrounded by mountains so rugged that only from the east was there easy access. Not far from this eastern entrance was a little area called Powder Springs, a well-frequented stopping place for outlaws on the run. But Powder Springs was overshadowed by Brown's Park, which would become known as one of the way stations on a fabled outlaw trail that stretched from Hole-in-the-Wall in Wyoming to the north to Robbers' Roost in Utah to the south. All three of these spots were in country well removed from the towns being established along the Union Pacific railroad, but of the three, Brown's Park had a particular advantage. It straddled the borders of Utah and Colorado and was only a few miles from the Wyoming line. Thus, if by some unlikely chance a posse from one of the settled areas ventured into the wilderness in pursuit of a badman, in Brown's Park that bad man could simply ride across the border into another state and thumb his nose at his pursuers.

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#### THE BASSETT WOMEN

In this rustlers' hangout, surrounded by warring cattlemen, the Bassetts lived in a world of rustling and thievery, of lynching and other forms of murder. Their neighbors could comprise the standard cast of a Hollywood western: honest ranchers, rough and tough cowboys, worthless drifters, dastardly villains, sneaking rustlers, gentlemanly bank robbers, desperate outlaws, and ruthless cattle barons. Most Americans assume this world vanished long ago, yet people alive today remember Queen Ann striding along in her custom-made boots and Josie riding to town for supplies with her team and wagon. Ann died in 1956 when the Korean War was already part of history. When Josie followed her in 1964, the race to put a man on the moon had already begun. Both women were raised in a wilderness but lived to see an atomic, electronic world. Both women brought to that new world a combination of pioneer values and an ut-

ter disregard for any conventions that ran counter to their own standards of right and wrong. They were sometimes condemned by their more conservative contemporaries—understandably so, for what they did was not always admirable. They lived their lives as they wished, doing what they wanted to do or what they felt they were compelled to do, with never a serious qualm when they overstepped the bonds of "proper" society. Since the day when the Pilgrims first stepped on Plymouth Rock, an independent woman has been no rarity in a country which always had a new frontier. Courage, resourcefulness and strength of will were necessities in wilderness communities, and people who possessed these qualities were valued and respected regardless of their sex. It is not surprising that the first crack in the wall of political discrimination against women appeared in frontier Wyoming, where in 1869 the territorial legislature gave women the right to vote in territorial elections. When those Wyoming women went to the polling booths, they were the first women in the United States—even the first in all the world—to cast ballots. Elizabeth and her daughters were not active feminists; rather, they were pupils of the feminists who had prepared the way for them. And they were apt pupils. They were unusually independent and exceptionally autonomous, for even on the Wyoming frontier the typical woman was a follower of her man, not his leader. If the Bassett women seem forerunners of the feminists of the 1980s, it is because they were indeed in advance of their times in seizing the freedom which the frontier offered. Even so, their story would not be worth the telling if it were not for their personal qualities—audacity and strong will, high temper and obstinacy, good humor and open-handedness, unashamed sexuality—qualities that their contemporaries summed up as "the Bassett charm."

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Josie's cabin still stands and can be seen today in Dinosaur National Monument in northeastern Utah. When the old lady died, the National Park Service bought the five acres she still owned and added them to its three hundred square miles of mountains and barely accessible canyons carved out by the Green and Yampa Rivers. The homestead is on the fringe of this wilderness, as is the Monument's museum, a huge, greenhouse-like structure covering the remnants of the vast cache of dinosaur bones which gave the Monument its name. Twice a day the Park Service loads tourists onto a large open-sided bus and takes them out along the Green River, past the red sandstone bluffs with their pictographs left by long-gone Indian tribes, and down across Cub Creek to Josie's homestead. While the tourists are still on the bus, the Ranger uses his loudspeaker to tell them the legend of Josie Morris. "She was raised in an outlaws' hangout . . . Some people say that Butch Cassidy was one of her sweethearts . . . She was married five times, and there's a story that she took a shot at one of her husbands but she denied it—she said that if she had been the one to shoot him she wouldn't have missed. . . . Perhaps she got tired of men, for she came here when she was almost forty years old and lived out here—alone—for fifty years, with

no running water, no electricity, no telephone. A real pioneer. " The outlines of a carefully laid out working ranch still show despite the years of disuse and the tangle of late-summer weeds. The Park Service has done little to preserve the place except to board up the cabin's windows and put a plywood canopy over the roof to protect it from the heavy winter snows. Even so, it is obvious that this is no hermit's shack, no squatter's cabin. Peering through the slits in the boarded-up windows, one sees a smallish, square living room with a good brick fireplace and the faded remnants of once-gay blue wallpaper. To one side of this main room is a kitchen, to the other are two small bedrooms. There are porches on two sides of the cabin. On one of these Josie used to sleep, even during the bitter winter months. Outside, a log fence still bars the mouth of the box canyon where Josie penned her livestock, although the canyon itself is now a thicket of brush and young trees. In what was once her garden area, old fences sag from the weight of her grapevines turned wild. The orchard is a graveyard of gnarled, dying trees. Wild watercress grows in the damp soil near the spring which still fills the pond where Josie kept ducks and geese, before spilling into the meadows below. The chicken house and an old corral still stand, but the springhouse where she stored her butter and the sty where she kept "Miss Pig" can only be imagined.

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The Park Service's benign neglect has given a poignant authenticity to what remains of Josie's homestead. The visitors walk and speak softly, as if from respect for the pervading quiet of the place, a quiet broken only by the gurgle of the spring water from an old iron pipe. One can imagine the loneliness of living in such a silent place and the serene strength of the woman who could endure that silence. The silence is provocative, raising questions that the Ranger's rehearsed information does not answer, questions as to what kind of woman Josie really was and where she came from. If the ghost of Josie Morris could be asked those questions, it is doubtful that she could provide answers, for Josie was always too busy to spend much time on idle introspection. And if Queen Ann's ghost were at Josie's side, her answer might only raise more questions. "She was a Bassett! A Bassett of Brown's Park!" To Ann, that would explain everything.

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Amber Studies of Past Lives and Thoughts of the Present

A Personal Interview With Josie Bassett Posted on August 20, 2014 by Steve

#### A PERSONAL INTERVIEW WITH JOSIE BASSETT

By Kerry Ross Boren

Josie was getting old, but she still got around



In 1960, just before leaving for a two year study of the motion picture business in California. I was living in Daggett County, Utah, writing articles on western history for national periodicals. One particular article dealt with the topic of Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch, and received numerous letters in response. Two of these letters concerned Josie Bassett.

The first was from noted author John Rolfe Burroughs, who was then in the process of researching his award- winning history of Brown's Park.<sup>1</sup> He had recently obtained an interview with Josie and recommended her as a remarkable source of information on Brown's Park, Butch Cassidy, and much more.

The second letter was from a lady who lived at Jensen, Utah, who was a neighbor of Josie's, and who stated that she had gone deer hunting with Josie every year for a decade or more. She informed me that Josie knew a great deal about Butch Cassidy, but that she was then in her 86th year and in declining health, and she suggested that if I wanted to talk with Josie, I should do so soon, before it was too late.

Inspired by these letters, I determined to make a trip to Jensen, Utah, where Josie lived, and to interview her.

This was not the first I had heard of Josie Bassett, however. My grandfather, William Schofield, Sr., had known her for many years, and had filled my inquisitive young mind with tales about her. Her exploits were near legendary in the region where I was born and raised.

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One of my good friends and long-time acquaintances was George Stephens, of Green River, Wyoming. George was a former Deputy Sheriff of Daggett County, Utah, and Sweetwater County, Wyoming, and, in 1914, had been delegated to serve a warrant upon Josie relating to an inquest into the death of her husband, Emerson Wells. He kept a private museum in the basement of his spacious home, among the relics of which was a small bottle of poison, part of the evidence used in the case, against her.

The Bassett family was of the oldest in Brown's Park. Uncle Sam Bassett, in company of Louie Simmons (son-in- law of Kit Carson), first set foot in Brown's "Hole" – as Brown's Park was then called – in the autumn of 1853. The Bassetts remained as residents of Brown's Park for the next 120 years.

Samuel and Herbert Bassett came from Herkimer County in the Mohawk Valley of central New York State. Sam, the oldest, joined the gold rush to California in 1849, then traveled the western regions as a prospector, guide, and government scout. It was during one such excursion that he first visited Brown's Hole in 1852.

Sam Bassett's diary recorded that event as follows: Brown's Hole, November, the month of Thanksgiving, 1852.

Louis (Simmons) and I “down in.” Packs off. Mules in lush cured meadow. Spanish Joe’s trail for travel could not be likened to an up-state high lane for coach-and-four. Mountains to the right of us, mountains to the left of us, not in formation but highly mineralized. To the South, a range in uncontested beauty of contour, its great stone mouth drinking a river (Lodore Canyon). Called on neighbors lest we jeopardize our social standing. Chief Catump, and his tribe of Utes. Male and female created He them. And “Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed so fine.” Beads, bones, quills, and feathers of artistic design. Buckskins tanned in exquisite coloring of amazing hues, resembling velvets of finest texture. Bows and Arrows. “Let there be no strife between me and thee!”<sup>2</sup>

Another diary entry two years later, written in the same poetic language, indicates that Sam Bassett had settled permanently:

Brown’s Hole, June 22nd, 1854.

Warren P. Parsons and his wife Annie have arrived and our first white squaw, “Snapping Annie,” is expertly driving her slick oxen “Turk” and “Lion.” “Whoa! Haw, Turk! Gee, Lion!” commanded by a female bullwhacker... Man’s freedom in paradise is doomed.<sup>3</sup>

Uncle Sam Bassett’s original holding in Brown’s Hole was on the first bench above what became known as “Hoy meadows,” facing upon the entrance to Lodore Canyon. At a later date he built a cabin on the west bank of Beaver Creek where that stream emerges from Cold Spring Mountain.

Herbert Bassett was born in Bridgewater, Herkimer County, New York, on July 31, 1839.<sup>4</sup> After leaving college, he went to Illinois, where he became a school teacher before enlisting in the Union Army in 1861. He mustered out at Pine Bluff, Arkansas, in 1865, with the rank of major, and was thereafter made Collector of Revenue at the port of Norfolk, Virginia, where he met and married Mary Elizabeth Crawford. She was born in Norfolk in 1855; her parents died when she was small, and she and her sister, Hannah, were raised by their maternal grandparents, the Chamberlains.

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The couple moved to Little Revenue, where, in addition to his duties as Collector of Internal Revenue, Herb became Clerk of the District Court. During the several years they resided here, two children were born to them – Josephine and Samuel. Afflicted with asthma, Herb Bassett set out for California with his family in the hope that the climate would improve his health. They stopped at Rock Springs, Wyoming, to visit his brother Sam, and it was he who persuaded Herb that the climate of Brown’s Hole would be as beneficial to his health as California would.

Herb didn’t go there directly, but took a job for a time as book-keeper of the mercantile firm of A.C. Beckwith and Company at Evanston, Wyoming. in

1877, when Josephine (“Josie”) was four, the family moved to Brown’s Hole. Herb bought a team of horses and a wagon at Rock Springs to haul the family’s possessions – which included a small organ and a considerable library – and set out for Brown’s Hole via Irish Canyon.

When the panorama of Brown’s Hole at last unfolded before them, Elizabeth Bassett asked her husband to halt the team, and, standing up in the wagon, she said, almost breathlessly: “Herb, no place as lovely as this ever should have been called a ‘hole.’ It’s more like a park. That’s what it is – a tremendous park! And that’s what people are going to call it – at least when they’re around me!”

The Bassetts spent the first year of their residence in Brown’s Park with Uncle Sam Bassett in his one-room log cabin several miles north of Lodore Canyon. In this cabin, attended by Dr. John Parsons (father of Warren P. Parsons mentioned above), on May 25, 1878, Elizabeth Bassett gave birth to her third child, a daughter, whom they named Anna. Elizabeth had no milk, and baby Anna’s life was in doubt until one of the Brown’s Park bachelors – Buffalo Jack Rife – came up with the solution.

A band of Yampatika Ute Indians were camped several hundred yards from Uncle Sam’s cabin, and Rife, an ex- buffalo hunter who spoke the Ute language, had a powwow with Chief Marcisco and the medicine man, Muchekuegant Star. Within an hour of her birth, Anna – the first white child born in Northwestern Colorado – was handed over to the medicine man who carried her bareheaded, but otherwise warmly bundled up, through a pouring rain to a Ute squaw who had given birth a few days previously.

Every two hours thereafter, day and night, little Anne was carried by the medicine man to her foster mother, Seeabaka, until the time when the band of Utes moved on, at which time Asbury B. Conway showed up with a milk cow which he presented to the Bassetts.

Herb Bassett eventually built a single-story five-room house out of logs, erected in the form of a cross, at Joe’s Spring. Eventually there were other out-buildings, including a large bunk house. Despite the fact that they had the best-appointed home in the Park, for the first couple of years they were so poor they had to live off the generosity of their neighbors.

In 1879 Herb constructed a cabin in remote Zenobia Basin (so named by Elizabeth Bassett), near the crest of Douglas Mountain, at the suggestion of Buffalo Jack Rife, to summer his cattle. The Bassett brand was Z-K on the left side, a split left ear, and a cropped right ear. Unlike most of his neighbors, Herb Bassett was opposed to making money by rustling his neighbors cattle. Later, it was Herb Bassett who, in company with Tom Davenport, pioneered the growing of grain in Brown’s Park and brought in cradles and scythes with which to harvest it.

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Hospitable by nature, the Bassetts welcomed all visitors, no questions asked, and the Bassett ranch became a favorite stop-over for travelers. They were a musical family, especially Herb, who played the violin and several other instruments. Also deeply religious, it became a habit of many to drop over to the Bassetts of a Sunday to gather around Herb at the organ and sing hymns.

The Bassett organ became the most traveled instrument of its kind in the Rocky Mountains, being carried by wagon, buckboard, and two-wheeled cart to every dance and social gathering in the Park. John Jarvie, Sr., the amiable Scotsman, was able to coax more than a hundred numbers out of the instrument, every one by ear. Whenever Butch Cassidy was in the Park, he accompanied with his harmonica, and so often Harry Longabaugh (The Sundance Kid) played current tunes on his clarinet.

Another attraction at the Bassett home was the rather extensive library. Ann Bassett wrote: "The home contained good books such as Shakespeare's complete works, Shelley, Keats, Dickens, Byron, Longfellow, and many other works of poems, literature, and travel. My parents had brought books from their eastern home. Others were given us by Judge Conway. Bassett's ranch was a place for people to congregate, relax, and read..."<sup>5</sup> One of those often found there, feet kicked up, enjoying a good book, was Butch Cassidy, whose particular favorites were Dickens and, surprisingly, world history.

The Lodore Post Office was located at the Bassett ranch for many years, which added to the number of visitors there. The original post office, "Brown's Park, Utah," was officially established on February 14, 1881 on the Jarvie ranch near Bridgeport, at the western end of the Park; on June 8, 1887, this office was abolished. On June 3, 1889, the post office of "Lodore, Colorado" was activated, with C.B. Sears as postmaster, but for some reason Sears failed to qualify, and, on January 8, 1890, A.H. (Herbert) Bassett received the appointment. As Justice of the Peace (an office he resigned in 1892) and postmaster, he played an important role in community affairs.

Hi Bernard, who became his son-in-law, was always uncomfortable in Herb's presence, saying: "I never could get acquainted with Mr. Bassett for he is a religious man, and is way over my head. He peers over his specs at me and seems to be smiling behind his long white beard as if he was amused by the antics of some strange insect he had come upon by accident..."<sup>6</sup>

Eventually there were five Bassett children: Josephine, Samuel, Anna, Elbert, and George – the last three were born in Brown's Park. All of the Bassett children were strongly attached to their father, while their mother, Elizabeth Bassett, was the most dominant figure. Elizabeth like to run things, and Herb was only too obliging to let her do it without interference. Elizabeth is described as having been small in stature, but beyond that physical limitation, there was nothing small about her.

Elizabeth Bassett did not know the meaning of fear. Gregarious and generous, she was also extremely out-spoken. She so loved to talk, in fact, that the Indians referred to her as “Magpie.” Greatly liked by her friends, she was anathema to her enemies, among the latter being the Hoyes.

Elizabeth resented the Hoy brothers’ intrusion into the affairs of everyone in the Park, and conspired to create an informal organization to bring them to task, and ended up nearly doing them in. Henry Hoy was the prosecuting witness who brought a charge of arson against Angus McDougal, Jack Fitch, and a Bassett favorite, Isom Dart, a black man with a most amazing history. Simultaneously, Adea A. Hoy charged McDougal and Dart with altering

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brands on three of his horses. Among witnesses for the defense were Elizabeth Bassett, Sam Bassett, Jr., and Thomas Davenport. Angus McDougal was convicted on both counts and was sentenced to serve five years in the Colorado State Penitentiary at Canon City, his mittimus of commitment being dated October 8, 1899. Isom Dart broke jail at Hahn’s Peak and was never brought to trial.<sup>7</sup>

After her untimely death, J. S. Hoy is quoted as saying: “We came into Brown’s Park to run the nesters out. We started it, but Elizabeth Bassett finished it, and she finished it good!”<sup>8</sup>

Mrs. Bassett inspired a strong loyalty in the breasts of the homeless and outlawed young men who made Brown’s Park their refuge and the Bassett ranch their home. Any one of them,

it is said, “willingly would have died and gone to hell for her.”

Matt Rash (a nephew of Davy Crockett) was one of her devoted followers, as was Isom Dart, Angus McDougal, Jim McKnight, and many others who constituted what became known as the “Bassett Gang.” Elizabeth Bassett did not hesitate to use them when occasion merited it.

The Bassett Gang restricted their activities, for the most part, in the acquisition of horses and cattle by rustling. Of course, there were notable exceptions, such as the burning of the Hoy buildings, after which a huge celebration was held at the Bassett ranch.

With such characters as Charley Crouse, to whom Matt Warner refers as “that good-hearted old cattle rustler,”<sup>9</sup> James Warren, who hired young runaways such as Matt Warner and Cleophas Dowd to assist him in his rustling activities, and the Bassett Gang, rustling was rampant in Brown’s Park. Men such as Matt Rash acquired sizeable herds in this fashion.

Elizabeth Bassett, consequently, spent much of her time in the saddle, and she could ride, rope and shoot as well as any of her young followers. Still, as befitted

a well-bred Southern lady, she rode side-saddle. Ann Bassett wrote:

“Her outfit consisted of a beautifully fitted ‘habit’ of rich, dark blue material, long-skirted and draped with grace. For trimming, there were a number of gleaming brass buttons. She was a blonde...Mounted on her thoroughbred horse, ‘Calky,’ she was a picture to remember.”<sup>10</sup>

She was also an ardent feminist and was active in the women’s suffrage movement, and, following the death of Dr. Parsons in 1879 – the first “natural” death in Brown’s Park, according to J.S. Hoy – she served as Brown’s Park’s surgeon.” Says her daughter Ann: “One young man of our neighborhood was riding near a barbed wire fence and his horse ran into the wire, which cut the flesh of the cowpuncher’s leg to the bone. It was a deep, bad but. Mother was called as usual. She put five stitches into the flesh, with sewing or sack needles as used on horses and cattle, with common table salt as an antiseptic, and herbs gathered by the Indians to stop the flow of blood...”<sup>11</sup>

One of the Bassett’s hired men, Jack Rollas, was killed by a Texan named Hambleton. Hambleton always maintained that he had trailed Rollas for two years to exact vengeance for the murder of his brother in Abilene, Kansas. After the shooting, Elizabeth Bassett took them prisoner, lining them up at gunpoint against the bunk house wall. She then placed a gun in the hand of the mortally wounded Rollas and told him to kill Hambleton, or all three of the captive Texans if he wanted to, but Rollas was by then too weak to comply.

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Messengers were sent to summon Justice of the Peace Charles Allen, and Herbert Bassett was left to guard the prisoners. Elizabeth had ridden away to summon some of her “boys.” Toward evening, fearing a lynching, Herb told the three Texans that they “better go to the barn and feed your horses,” adding that he trusted them to turn themselves in to the sheriff at Hahn’s Peak, then the Routt County seat. Nothing ever was heard of Hambleton and his companions again. Ann reported, however, that “the Bassett ranch had three good Winchesters...to be added to the gun rack.”<sup>12</sup>

Elizabeth Bassett died, presumably of appendicitis, on December 11, 1892, at the age of 37. She is buried in the private cemetery at the Bassett ranch. Herbert Bassett died July 21, 1926. He spent the last years of his life in an Old Soldiers’ Home in Illinois, and is buried in a military cemetery at Springfield, Illinois. He was 87.

The monument to Elizabeth Bassett’s career occurred when she and her gang purportedly rustled 500 head of Flying V D Cattle in a single raid. Cornered in Zenobia Basin on Douglas Mountain. Elizabeth Bassett and her underlings “rim-rocked” the entire herd – i.e., drove them over the cliff into Lodore Canyon, destroying any evidence that might have been used to convict them. Small

wonder, then, that Elizabeth Bassett's only two daughters should turn out to be images of their amazing mother.

Josephine, who was the oldest of the Bassett children, was domestically inclined, but in a country where there were but very few girls, and both Josephine and Anna being unusually attractive, they were extremely popular, to say the least. For a time, Josephine was "sparked" by Butch Cassidy, but Butch was not the marrying kind, and eventually Josie married Jim McKnight.

Josie's first child was a boy whom she named Herbert after her father, but who went by the name of "Chick" throughout his life. Not long after she bore another son to Jim McKnight, and the two boys became the delight of Isom Dart, who ran his cattle at Summit Spring on Cold Spring Mountain with McKnight, where the latter had a claim.

Isom was around the McKnight home a great deal of the time, helping with chores much as he had done for Josie's mother. He never tired of playing with the little McKnight boys, and he would sing Negro songs to them, and "put on a show" when they gleefully demanded it (he had once been a rodeo clown). In 1900, both Isom Dart and Matt Rash were killed from ambush by the notorious "rustler exterminator" Tom Horn.

Matt Rash (real name Madison Rash) went to work for the Middlesex Land and Cattle Company upon his arrival in Brown's Park, and later he went to work for Tim Kinney's Circle K outfit. When Kinney went out of the cattle business, Matt Rash showed up in Brown's Park driving more than 70 head of cattle which numbered only four cows, the rest of them being young stock.

Taking up a piece of land two or three miles west of the Bassett ranch, Rash built a cabin on it, and began ingratiating himself with Elizabeth Bassett, which worked very effectively. In fact, Elizabeth gave him a fine sorrel mare which became his favorite saddle horse – which Tom Horn shot at the same time he killed Rash. Matt Rash was engaged to be married to Josie's sister, Ann, at the time of his death.

If Josie was domestically inclined and more feminine, her sister Ann was exactly the opposite. As she herself wrote: "Through trial and effort I became a specialist at evading mother's staff of authority. With the speed of a

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wapiti I would race to the bunkhouse, that place of many attractions, where saddle=galled cowpunchers congregated to sing range ballads and squeak out doleful tunes on the fiddle. Somewhere in a secluded corner an absorbing round of poker was sure to be in session..."<sup>13</sup>

Education was a priority in the Bassett household. The earliest record of the Bassett sisters' educational development appears in an item in the Craig, Colorado Pantograph of November, 1892:

The Misses Bassett and Mr. Matt Rash arrived in the city Monday from Brown's Park. The young ladies are here for the purpose of attending school, and are stopping at the home of Mr. Joe Carroll.

A few weeks later the newspaper printed Elizabeth Bassett's obituary notice; the only person who had ever been able to exercise any control over Ann Bassett was gone. "About a year after Mother passed away...I began to be a problem to my father...Although wise in many ways, (he) was too tender and kind-hearted to control a girl of my temperament..."<sup>14</sup>

Taking the advice of Tim Kinney, who was an Irish-Catholic, Herb shipped his youngest daughter off to St. Mary's of the Wasatch academy on the outskirts of Salt Lake City, where she spent the next several years. Following this, she was shipped off again, this time to a fashionable finishing school in the East – Miss Potter's school for girls in Boston, Massachusetts, according to Ann – where she often abandoned the decorum of side-saddle at the formal riding academy in the absence of the French instructor, and put on rodeo for the other girls by riding bareback and astride her horse.

During the two years that she spent in the finishing school, Ann was on probation the greater part of the time. When she finally departed, the headmistress breathed a sigh of relief and vowed "Never again."

Ann Bassett was not simply attractive, but was extremely beautiful, and therefore tremendously popular. Her first serious romantic interest was tall, dashing William Ellsworth "Elzy" Lay, but ultimately he joined Butch Cassidy, became a bank and train robber, went to prison in New Mexico, and drifted out of her life. Her next love came in 1897, when at nineteen she "fell" for thirty-two year old Matt Rash.

After Matt Rash was killed by Tom Horn on July 10, 1900, Ann, on August 1, 1900, through her attorney, Wells B. McClelland of Steamboat Springs, filed a Petition for Letters Testamentary in the Routt County Probate Court. At the time of Rash's death, he had some 600 head of cattle, mortgaged to the First National Bank of Rock Springs in the amount of \$6,000. Ann claimed that Matt Rash had made a will on May 20, 1900, leaving all his personal property to "his betrothed wife," and the Blanche Tilton, Ebb (Elbert) Bassett, E.B. (Longhorn) Thompson, Larry Curtin, and Josephine McKnight knew of the execution of the will, which was since "lost." When Matt's father, Samuel A. Rash, and one of his brothers, James L. Rash, contested the claim, Ann finally settled out of court for \$250, and the petition was withdrawn September 24, 1900. However, it is worthy of note that when Sheriff Charles W. Neiman was appointed administrator of the Rash estate, he was only able to find 485 of Matt's 600 head of cattle.

After Matt Rash's death, Ann Bassett began a vendetta against Ora Haley, owner of the Two Bar outfit, whom she blamed for hiring Tom Horn as a bounty hunter. Says she: "Throwing caution to the winds, I pushed cattle off the range.



I had to work alone. My neighbors did not support me in this, my challenge to Haley, and defiance of law

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and order. No other stockmen were responsible for what I did. I turned the heat against myself by an open declaration of war..."<sup>15</sup>

From about 1901 to 193, Ann spent her time driving off hundreds of Two Bar cattle, most of which she drove into the swirling waters of the Green River, to be carried through the gates of Lodore Canyon and drowned. Her efforts earned her the title "Queen of the Rustlers," shortened usually to "Queen Ann." Hi Bernard, Two Bar foreman, stated: "A mere handful of people in Brown's Park set up a little kingdom – or queendom – of their own from the Utah and Wyoming lines, to the Little Snake River...I went into Brown's Park...and got cold-shouldered...I did not meet Ann Bassett, but I received a letter from her soon afterwards, advising that neither I nor the Haley outfit were desirable;...The following spring I was making a tour of range investigation on the remote Douglas Mountain mesa, and I met Ann Bassett riding alone – a smallish imp of a girl sitting astraddle of a superb horse as though she had grown there. She was dressed in at least one gun...My hands wanted to reach for something high overhead. I restrained them with difficulty, and introduced myself..I got a salty reply that conveyed the idea that gray wolves were natives, and belonged in the country, whereas I was nothing but a Two Bar worm..."

Eventually, realizing that she could not defeat Haley by present tactics, Queen Ann did something out of spite and probably as another tactic: On April 13, 1904, at Craig, Colorado, she married Hi Bernard! Ann was 26, and Bernard 46. It was the first marriage for both of them. Hi Bernard was probably correct when he stated that Ann thought more of her pet chipmunks than she did of him.

Hi Bernard's defection from the Ora Haley outfit didn't have the effect she had hoped it would; Haley simply replaced him with a tough Texas cowboy named Heck Lytton. Unrelenting, Ann continued her depredations against the hated Two Bar for nearly a decade.<sup>10</sup>

Then, on March 15, 1911, a weather-beaten prospector showed up at the Smelter Ranch, calling himself Nelson; Ann loaned him a saddle, and let him sleep in the bunkhouse. He dined with the family and played cribbage with Tom Yarberry. "Nelson" turned out to be a livestock detective.

When he arrived at the ranch the meat house had been empty. Two days later there were three quarters of beef, and fresh wagon tracks leading up to the door. On the back porch of the ranch house he found a pair of women's overshoes that were splattered with blood. On March 18 he rode to Two Bar headquarters and reported his discoveries to the new foreman, Bill Patton.

On August 12, 1911, an article in the Craig Empire stated that Patton had found the remains of the butchered beef, with right ear cut off and the brand cut out of the hide. Patton had Ann Bassett and Tom Yarberry arrested.

The preliminary hearing was held before Justice Z.Z. Carpenter on March 31, 1911. W.B. Wiley, attorney for the Cattleman's Association, was the prosecuting attorney, and attorney for the defense was Judge A.M. Gooding of Steamboat Springs. The case attracted so much attention, Craig citizens rented the opera house so that all might hear the evidence. The Craig Empire reported on April 1:

Interest naturally centered in Mrs. Bernard, who is really a remarkable personage. Raised in the wilds of Northwestern Colorado, trained from childhood to ride and shoot, she has a splendid education which has been improved by extensive travel. She is said to be as much at home at a swell social function as while taking her

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regular "watch" with the other cowpunchers on the roundup. As she appeared in court Thursday, stylishly attired, she looked the part of "Queen Ann" with her wealth of brown hair and stately carriage.

The trial of The People vs. Ann Bassett Bernard and Thomas Yarberry commenced in August, 1911. There were numerous witnesses, including Ebb Bassett, Hi Bernard, Chick Bowen, Emery Clark and, of course, Ann herself. The jury reported on August 12, 1911 that agreement on a verdict was impossible, and it came to trial again in August, 1913. Ann stood alone, for Yarberry and skipped his thousand dollar bond. Very little new evidence was introduced at the new trial. The defense was handicapped because Chick Bowen, one of the most important witnesses, had been shot to death at Baggs, Wyoming, and two other witnesses, Matt Morelock and Bill Malone, "left for parts unknown."

Nevertheless, cattle baron Ora Haley was hated, and Queen Ann had a large following, and it soon became apparent that the cards were in her favor. Ann was acquitted. Afterward she wrote: "I did everything they ever accused me of, and whole lot more."<sup>16</sup>

Following the victory, the Craig Courier put out a special edition for the only time in its history, there was a parade headed by the town band, a banquet was held at the Baker House hotel, after which everyone went to the silent movies, where occasionally a slide would flash on the screen which read: HURRAH FOR VICTORY! Finally, there was an all-night dance, where Queen Ann reigned as guest of honor.

In 1920, Queen Ann married, as her second husband, Frank Willis. Willis was born in Reeceville, Tennessee in 1883, and in 1904 had worked for the Two Bar outfit. Patton had, in fact, offered him \$500 to go to work for Ann Bassett and

gathered evidence against her, but he refused, quitting and taking other work in Wyoming and Nebraska. When they married, Ann was 42 years old and Willis was 37.

Shortly after marrying they moved to California, where for ten years Willis worked in the oil fields, sometimes with Ann's former sweetheart, Elzy Lay. In 1931 they moved to Arizona and ran 1,200 head of cattle near Hackberry. Ann even enrolled temporarily as a forestry student at the University of Arizona, until she learned that the U.S. Forest Service would not accept women as forest rangers.

In 1937 Ann and Frank sold their Arizona holdings and spent the next years prospecting and roaming the West. James Dowd, son of Cleophas Dowd, who had once worked for Elizabeth Bassett in Brown's Park, once told me that he ran into Queen Ann in a most unusual way near Boron, California, in the late 1930's or early 1940's. A circus bear had escaped following a train derailment near Barstow, and the animal was pursued into the desert. A reward was posted for the animal "dead or alive," for it was considered dangerous. No one seemed to be able to track the animal down until Ann Bassett Willis appeared on the scene. Within several days' time she tracked the animal into the hills and shot it, making the local news. She was past sixty by this time.<sup>17</sup>

The uranium boom of the 1950's found Ann and Frank living at Leeds, Utah, where Frank prospected around Silver Reef, and Ann set about writing her memoirs, dubbed "Tracks and Scars." She died at Leeds in May, 1956, at the age of 78.

A complete history of the amazing Bassett's would fill volumes. Some mention might be made of Josie and Ann's brother, Ebb, often called "Kid Bassett," or "The Bassett Kid." He was the wild brother, even as Ann had been the

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wild sister. For a time he rode as a rustler, working closely with Isom Dart before the turn of the century, and aiding his sister in her vendetta against the Two Bar later.

Of Josie Bassett much could be said: her love affair with Butch Cassidy, her many notorious marriages, and her own sensational trial in Uintah County, Utah for cattle rustling. But rather than attempt a biography, it is perhaps better to allow Josie to tell her own story, from my interview with her in the early summer of 1960.

In 1919, Josie took up a homestead on Cub Creek, not far from the Green River, a few miles northwest of the little town of Jensen. This would be her home, except for a few "detours," for the rest of her life. Turning off on a little dirt road running north from Highway 40, I drove along a winding lane which led eventually to a gate barring the road at the bottom of a small hill. The gate

was locked, so I left my car, climbed over the fence, and walked trepidatiously up the incline towards the cabin nestled at the crest of the knoll, beneath an out-cropping of rimrock which formed a ridge running east to west from the Green River.

I felt a little uncertain; I was not yet twenty years old, and the stories I had heard of Josie worked wonders on my imagination, coupled with the quiet mystique of the isolated place. Our mutual friend had assured me that Josie had agreed to the interview, and had even recognized me by my family connections, and so would be expecting me – the problem was, it was I who didn't know what to expect.

As I approached the cabin, I noted a screened porch and what appeared to be a lean-to additions to the place. Pigs and chickens ambled about the yard and to one side were corrals and out-buildings. Huge cottonwood trees ringed the perimeter, offering ample shade in summer and some protection from driving winter snows and accompanying winds.

Before I reached the cabin, I saw Josie – before she saw me. She was beneath one of the cottonwood trees, tugging on a rope, pulling a freshly slaughtered yearling into the air with the aid of a block-and-tackle. I was amazed at her strength and agility. At 86, she was very slight, and could not have weighed much more than 100 pounds, in my estimation. Yet, she handled the lifting of the carcass with only a little trouble.

When I called out, “Mrs. Morris?,” she looked up, startled. She moved swiftly to the screened porch and grabbed up a Winchester rifle and pointed it directly at me.

“Who are you? What do you want?” she demanded. I told her my name, and asked whether our mutual friend had not mentioned my coming.

“Was that today?” she asked. “Mercy, I must have forgotten all about it.”

She explained that she was in the middle of butchering a beef, that one of her sons or grandsons was coming up from St. Johns, Arizona, and was supposed to do it, but had not arrived on schedule, “but it wouldn't wait, don't you know,” she said. She asked if I would help her finish lifting it up under the branch, which I did, after which she wrapped a sheet around it and left it hanging in the shade while we talked.

I was cordially invited into her home – she replaced the Winchester against the door frame as we entered, much to my relief – and we sat at a homemade wooden table in her little kitchen, and talked. She was dressed in baggy blue jeans and a western shirt, and excused herself long enough to change into “proper” clothing, emerging after some

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little time from an adjacent room dressed nattily in brown slacks and a colorful print shirt rolled up at the sleeves. I noted that her arms were sun-speckled and leathery from years of exposure to the wind and weather. Her hair was a lovely silver-grey, cropped short, and held in place at the temples by large hair-pins. She possessed a most disarming smile and a wonderful charm which belied her otherwise tough reputation. Most of all, however, she was a delightful hostess and an articulate conversationalist, all of which seemed strangely out of place in such humble surroundings.

During our conversation, which lasted the better part of the afternoon, I discovered that Josie had two sides to her character – the one being that of an articulate and cultured lady, and the other a hardened and tough pioneer woman, extremely independent and capable. My interview with Josie covered numerous topics, and after a while she became more relaxed and spoke very frankly about many things. She seemed surprised that, at my tender age, I knew so many of her old acquaintances, and this seemed to break down any barriers or reservations she may have had. What follows, therefore, is a general account of my interview with Josie Bassett.

Josie remembered nothing of Little Rock, Arkansas, where she was born, being too young when the family left there, but she visited there in later years. Her first childhood memory was, perhaps suitably, of Brown's Park. She remembered playing the sand of Vermilion Creek with Indian children near her own age.

"I was perhaps five or six at the time," said Josie, "and I remember it so well. We didn't speak the same language, but we got along famously. We made little houses out of wet sand and clay, and diverted little rivulets from Vermilion Creek to make play rivers. It sounds like a silly thing, but it made such a strong impression, I can recall it as though it was yesterday. On the other hand, I'm not sure I could remember what I did yesterday..."

Concerning the incident of the shooting of Jack Rollas by Hambleton, Josie had this say: "Our Father was a very soft-hearted man and wouldn't condone a lynching, and he was also concerned about his reputation. He was postmaster, justice of the peace, and held a number of other offices. So he felt he could hardly afford to be involved in what was about to happen, and he turned the Texas cowboys loose on their word that they would turn themselves in at Hahn's Peak.

"However, the three men rode north instead towards Rock Springs. My mother had gathered some of her boys and when they arrived back at the bunkhouse to find the men gone, they set out immediately on their trail. Somewhere near the north end of Irish Canyon they caught up to them. There was no gunfight, because the Texas boys had been disarmed at the ranch, and they were also outnumbered two or three to one...They were hanged and buried there in Irish Canyon. It was always said they left the country, but we all knew better. Jim (McKnight) told me all about it, and he should have known – he was there when it happened..."

Josie told me about her first meeting with Butch Cassidy. Charley Crouse had leveled off a race course near Beaver Creek, on the north bank of the Green River. In those days, race tracks were not round, but simply straight courses with a place to turn at each end. Horses and riders, in order to win, had to race the length of the course, make a turn, and race back to the finish line. There were frequent spills, interference, and fights, and people came from miles around to share in the excitement. Betting and drinking were accompanying pastimes, and afterwards there was usually a dance which lasted until the early hours of the morning.

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Josie recalled that she was fifteen or sixteen when she first met Butch Cassidy (he was known as George Cassidy at that time). Butch rode Charley Crouse's champion bay mare to victory at the Beaver Creek races, and Josie was impressed.

"I thought he was the most dashing and handsome man I had ever seen. I was such a young thing, and giddy as most teenagers are, and I looked upon Butch as my knight in shining armor. But he was more interested in his horse than he was in me, and I remember being very put out by that. I went home after being snubbed by him and stamped my foot on the floor in frustration. My mother said, 'For goodness sakes, Josie, whatever are you doing?' I just blushed and said, 'Ants.'"

In later years, Butch spent a great deal of time around the Bassett Ranch, and at Herb's library, which, together with the post office, was kept in building apart from the ranch house. During these years, Butch and Josie were lovers. She was reluctant to admit this fact at first, but neither did she deny it.

"After one of Butch's rich uncles died (i.e., following a bank or train robbery), he was being pursued, and we put him up, hiding him in the hay loft. He used to say, 'Josie, I'm lonely up here. Come out and keep me company...' He asked me to go get him one of my father's books to read, because he was bored. I told him he couldn't read it, because it was dark, and it was too dangerous to light a lantern. He said, 'What am I going to do to keep from being bored?' Well, all I can say is, I didn't let him get bored..."

Was Butch a good shot?

"I saw Butch Cassidy back in the 1920's, after he came back from South America, and Ann (Queen Ann) knew him in later years, before he died. I operated the Vernon Hotel in Baggs until my boys were old enough to go to high school, and then we moved to Rock Springs, where there was a school for them to attend.

"Butch and Elzy Lay were both in Rock Springs, down at the Teton Bar. Bert Kraft, an old friend of mine, told them that I was in town, and Butch said, 'I'd really like to see Josie again.' Bert called me on the phone and told me to come

down, but he wouldn't say who wanted to see me over the phone, so I wouldn't come. I was busy with something or other, so Bert Kraft made a date for them to come see me that evening. When I opened the door, I recognized Butch right off. He had changed some, and both of them carried too much weight. First thing Butch says to me was, 'Josie, you always did make me chase after you.' He gave me a big hug, and so did Elzy, and we spent the better part of the night catching up on old times..."

Josie told me about the substance of those conversations, which I propose to include in a forthcoming narrative on Butch Cassidy. Suffice it to say that Butch related the story of his South American adventures, and the years subsequent to those events, to Josie upon that occasion.

Among the things Butch disclosed was that he had been married and had several children, had been prospecting in Alaska, and was proposing to do some prospecting along the Colorado River near Las Vegas, Nevada in the near future.

"Butch died in Johnnie, Nevada, 18 about fifteen years ago," Josie told me. "He was an old man when he died. He had been living in Oregon, and back East for a long time, where he worked for a railroad. In his last years he lived

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at Leeds, Utah with his cousins, the McMullens, and my sister knew him there...He died before Ann went there to live...She died at Leeds in 1956, about four years ago..."

There were two topics which I was reluctant to ask Josie about, being fearful of her reaction, but near the end of the interview, I summoned up enough courage to inquire about the death of one of her husbands, and her trial for cattle rustling. Surprisingly, she was not adverse to talking very frankly about either subject. Before allowing Josie to recite her version, it is timely to relate the circumstances of the death of Emerson Wells.

From Christmas of 1913 until after New Year's Day of 1914, there was a wild celebration at Linwood, Utah. On New Year's Eve, Josie and her husband, Emerson Wells, had joined friends in a party at Minnie Crouse Rasmussen's boarding house. Sometime during the evening, Wells excused himself to go upstairs to bed. On the following morning he was discovered in his bed, quite dead.

An inquest was held, and a warrant served upon Josie to attend. The warrant was served upon her by a reluctant deputy sheriff named George Stephens. Josie arrived, gun on hip, and packing her Winchester. She was absolved of any guilt in the death – the official verdict was "death by self-inflicted poison" – suicide.<sup>19</sup>

Josie's story: "We arrived at Linwood after driving from Brown's Park in a buckboard in one of the coldest blizzards of the year. We didn't plan on staying as long as we did, but the snow was so deep and the wind blowing so cold,

Minnie (Minnie was the daughter of Charley Crouse) talked us into staying over until after New Year's.

"Wells (Josie consistently referred to him as "Wells" instead of by his given name) wasn't feeling well when we arrived, and he spent the first few days in bed. But he felt well enough to join us at the New Year's Eve party..."

The New Year's Eve party was attended by invited guests from nearby Lucerne Valley in Utah, and Henry's Fork in Wyoming. My grandfather, Willard Schofield, Sr., "catered" drinks for the occasion, both at the boarding house and at the nearby "Roundhouse" saloon and dancehall, where an all-night dance was held to ring in the New Year. My father, Edward Boren, played his fiddle for the occasion.

Just before midnight, Emerson Wells said he was not feeling well, and Josie escorted him upstairs to bed, then returned to the celebration.

"He had had too much to drink, and I thought that was all that was wrong with him. Later in the evening I took him a cup of coffee, and he drank some of it. I left the cup on the night table next to the bed." It was late the following morning when Josie returned to her husband's room; Emerson Wells was dead.

The coroner was sent for, according to law, but the nearest office for this duty was at Green River, Wyoming. Dr. Tinker was sent for in the meantime, and he made out a death certificate, showing the death to have been by "natural causes." Josie was allowed to take the body back to Brown's Park for burial.

"We put the body in a homemade pine box put together by M.N. Larsen, and loaded it in the back of the wagon, and drove back to Brown's Park in freezing weather. Joe Good<sup>20</sup> drove the wagon..."

Meanwhile, the coroner arrived on the scene, accompanied by Deputy Sheriff George Stephens, and performed a cursory examination. A small brown bottle containing a liquid was found near the dead man's bed, and chemical

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7/27/23, 9:31 PM A Personal Interview With Josie Bassett | Amber

tests showed it to be strychnine poison – traces of residue in the bottom of the coffee cup proved to be the same poison.

An inquest was called and Deputy Stephens was compelled to ride to Brown's Park to serve a warrant upon Josie demanding her appearance. She was reluctant to accept it. "I knew this George Stephens; he was the stepson of George Solomon, former justice of the peace in that area some years before. I told Stephens that he was out of his jurisdiction. I lived in Colorado (the Bassett Ranch was in Routt County, Colorado, in the eastern end of the Park), and the warrant was issued in Wyoming. The so-called crime had occurred in Utah. I told Stephens where he could put his warrant."



Deputy Stephens commenced to tack the paper to the Bassett gatepost (upon which gate John Bennett had been hanged by a mob in 1898), and informed Josie – at a distance – that she had been duly served, and must appear at the inquest or be arrested. Josie appeared, armed to the teeth.

Certain witnesses testified that Josie and her husband had been arguing heavily on the night in question. Josie readily admitted it, saying that “Wells” had become drunk and she had argued with him about going to bed. She had seen the brown bottle, she said, but had assumed it was medicine he was taking for his recent illness. Whether it was because of her brace of arms, or for some other reason, Josie was acquitted. I was brazen enough to ask Josie whether she had placed the poison in Wells’s coffee. She responded with a wry grin:

“I drove my first husband, Jim McKnight, out of the house at the point of a gun and told him never to come back. Let’s just say that some men are harder to get rid of than others.”

Lastly, I spoke to Josie about a famous trial for cattle rustling, after she homesteaded at Jensen. Neighboring ranchers, discovering some of their cattle missing, searched the willows along the river bottoms where they discovered a buried cache of hides on Josie’s property. Charges were brought against her, and she came to trial.

“I put on a frilly print dress, and sensible shoes, and had my hair done in a domestic rool on the top of my head. I looked like a petite little middle-aged housewife as I stood before the judge. Putting on my best serious face, I said to him, ‘Your Honor, do you seriously believe that a little old lady weighing only 100 pounds could kill and butcher out even one beef cow by herself, let alone a dozen or more? If you can believe that, then I guess you will have to find me guilty.’”

Josie was exonerated. I have often wondered, in retrospect, whether I might have inadvertently helped Josie Bassett rustle a stolen beef that interesting day more than thirty years ago.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. *Where the Old West Stayed Young*, John Rolfe Burroughs, William Morrow and Company, New York, 1962.
  2. Samuel Bassett’s diary, quoted by Ann Bassett Willis in her unpublished memoirs.
  3. Ibid.
- <https://amberandchaos.net/?p=25> 14/19
- 7/27/23, 9:31 PM A Personal Interview With Josie Bassett | Amber
4. “Queen Ann of Brown’s park,” *The Colorado Magazine*, April, 1952.
  5. Ann Bassett Willis’s unpublished memoirs.

6. Hiram H. Bernard, as told to Frank Willis – quoted by Burroughs, op.cit., p. 46.
7. District Court records, Ninth Judicial District, Colorado, 1890.
8. Avvon Chew Hughel, as quoted by Burroughs, op.cit., p. 55.
9. Last of the Bandit Riders, Matt Warner and Murray E. King, The Caxton Printers, Ltd., Caldwell, Idaho, 1940.
10. Ann Bassett Willis's unpublished memoirs.
11. Ibid.
12. "Queen Ann of Brown's park," op.cit.
13. Ibid.
14. Ann Bassett Willis's unpublished memoirs.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Interview with James Dowd, Barstow, California, 1970.
18. See Burroughs, op.cit., p. 135.
19. Unpublished news item from files of Green River (Wyo.) Star; interview with George Stephens, Green River, Wyo., November 12, 1959, et. seq.
20. Joe Good's real name was Jose Bueno; according to Josie, he was the actual murdered of 15 year-old Willie Nickell, for which crime Tom Horn was hanged in 1903.

This entry was posted in American West, Colorado and tagged brown's settlement, butch cassidy, colorado, josie bassett. Bookmark the permalink.

23 Responses to A Personal Interview With Josie Bassett

Pingback: Butch Cassidy's Return | Amber

Marilyn Grace says:

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7/27/23, 9:30 PM Ann "Queen Ann" Bassett (1878-1956) - Find a Grave Memorial

Ann "Queen Ann" Bassett BIRTH 12 May 1878 Moffat County, Colorado, USA

DEATH 8 May 1956 (aged 77) Leeds, Washington County, Utah, USA

BURIAL Bassett Cemetery Maybell, Moffat County, Colorado, USA

MEMORIAL ID 7919122

Photo added by Pilgrims Patriots... Folk Figure, Western Rancher and Cattle Rustler. Known as the "Cattle Queen," by the age of eight, she could ride a horse, handle a gun, and curse as well as any man on the Bassett Ranch. She took to cattle rustling and sabotage to defend her family's holdings against the Two-Bar Ranch, a large cattle company vying for control of Brown's Park, Colorado range in 1900. During this time outlaws were known to frequent the community and her Added by Misty Eastin ranch. She had a friendship with Elsa Lay, a member of the Wild Bunch Gang and her sister Josie and Butch Cassidy were sweethearts for a while. Her open kindness toward the outlaw element caused rumor that she headed the Bassett Gang of cattle rustlers and even committed murder. She denied the most controversial, however she was brought to trial on a charge of cattle rustling. The first verdict resulted in a hung jury and the second trial she was acquitted. After the trial reporters dubbed her "Queen Ann." She was a force to be reckoned with and fought the cattle barons against a hostile attempt to take over her land. In 1923 she married a cowboy prospector and eventually settled in a small southwestern Utah town where she lived till her death. Her remains were buried on the Bassett family homestead.

Bio by: John "J-Cat" Griffith

Family Members Parents Amos Herbert Bassett 1834–1918

Mary Elizabeth Chamberlain Bassett 1855–1892

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7/27/23, 9:30 PM Ann "Queen Ann" Bassett (1878-1956) - Find a Grave Memorial

Spouses Hiram Henry Barnard 1857–1924 (m. 1904)

Francis Marion Willis 1883–1963 (m. 1923)

Siblings Josephine Bassett Morris 1874–1964

Samuel Clark Bassett 1875–1938

Elbert Bassett 1880–1925

George Crawford Bassett 1884–1951

How famous was Ann "Queen Ann" Bassett? Current rating: 63 votes

Sign-in to cast your vote.

Maintained by: Find a Grave Originally Created by: John "J-Cat" Griffith

Added: 28 Sep 2003 Find a Grave Memorial ID: 7919122

Find a Grave, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/7919122/ann-bassett>: accessed 27 July 2023), memorial page for Ann "Queen Ann" Bassett (12 May 1878–8 May 1956), Find a Grave Memorial ID 7919122, citing Bassett

Cemetery, Maybell, Moffat County, Colorado, USA; Maintained by Find a Grave.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/7919122/ann-bassett> 2/3

7/27/23, 9:23 PM Ann Bassett - Wikipedia

Ann Bassett Ann Bassett (May 12, 1878 – May 8, 1956), also known as Queen Ann Bassett, was a prominent female rancher of the Old Ann Bassett West, and with her sister Josie Bassett, was an associate of outlaws, particularly Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch.

Early life Bassett was born to Herb Bassett and Elizabeth Chamberlin Bassett near Browns Park, Colorado in 1878, but grew up in Utah, the second of two daughters. Her sister Josie was born in 1874. Herb Bassett was 20 years senior to his wife Elizabeth Chamberlain Bassett, and the couple moved to Browns Park some time around the earlier part of 1888. Herb Bassett had a profitable cattle ranch that straddled Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado. He often did business with notable outlaws of the era such as Butch Cassidy, Harvey "Kid Curry" Logan, and Black Jack Ketchum, selling them horses and beef for supplies. The park, as Browns Park is known, had been a haven for outlaws long before Ann Bassett Willis c. 1904 Butch and the boys started running stolen livestock through there. For decades, stolen horses were trailed through the park to Born Anna M. Bassett thriving mining communities in Eastern Colorado. Both Ann and May 12, 1878 Josie Bassett were attractive young women, well taught by their Moffat County, father in the arts of horse riding, roping, and shooting. Both were Colorado educated early on in prominent boarding schools, and were Died May 8, 1956 intelligent and articulate in their speech, but chose to return to the life of ranching. Many accounts state the sisters always (aged 77) preferred "cowboying" to being a lady. Leeds, Washington County, Utah By the time Ann Bassett was 15, she had become involved Resting Bassett Cemetery romantically with Butch Cassidy. Her sister Josie was involved place 40°47 29.04 N with Elzy Lay. Outlaws Ben Kilpatrick and Will "News" Carver, who were both later members of the Wild Bunch gang, also dated 108°50 44.88 W the sisters. These associations were what first exposed Bassett to Nationality American outlaws. Other names Queen Ann Bassett, Queen Ann, Cattle Association with outlaws Queen Occupations Western Rancher In 1896, several wealthy cattle barons in the area made attempts to purchase the Bassett ranch from the Bassetts. When the Presumed Cattle Bassetts refused, the barons began to rustle their cattle. Ann and Rustler her sister Josie, in turn, rustled cattle from them. This led to a Known for Association with feud, and resulted in the cattlemen bringing in hired killer Tom outlaws such as Horn to deal with what the cattlemen deemed to be criminals. Horn eliminated several known rustlers during that time, but took [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ann\\_Bassett](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ann_Bassett) 1/4

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no action against the Bassetts. While he also killed two rustlers in Butch Cassidy's Wild 1900, Isom Dart and Matt Rash (a sandy-haired Texas cowboy),

Bunch who were known to be associated with the Bassett family, this was romantically unrelated to the Bassett conflict with their neighbors. Involved with Butch By 1896, Josie Bassett was heavily involved in a relationship with Cassidy and Ben Elzy Lay, Cassidy's closest friend. Josie had also become involved Kilpatrick with Cassidy shortly after his release from an 18-month prison. Alleged girlfriend of sentence, during which time Ann was involved with Ben Sundance Kid alias Kilpatrick. When Elzy Lay began a relationship with a woman Etta Place named Maude Davis, Josie became involved with Will "News" Carver, and Ann returned to her involvement with Cassidy. Spouses Henry Bernard Through their relationships with the outlaws, and in exchange for Frank Willis their supplying the outlaws with beef and fresh horses from their ranch, the two sisters were in a position to get assistance from Parents Amos Herbert Cassidy and his gang in dealing with certain cattlemen who were Bassett pressing them to sell. Elizabeth Chamberlin Bassett This association was a deterrent that kept cowboys hired to harass the sisters from doing so, for fear of retribution from the outlaws. Relatives Josie Bassett Reportedly, Kid Curry, the most feared member of the Wild Bunch gang, once paid a visit to several cowboys known to be employed by the cattlemen, warning them to leave the Bassetts alone. Although the problems with the wealthy cattlemen's association continued well into 1902, by late 1899, the problems were rare, and little pressure was placed on the sisters to sell their ranch. Despite the seemingly constant changes in romantic partners by both the Bassett sisters and the gang members, no animosity was reported to occur as a result of this.

Although both sisters were taking part in the fight against the powerful cattlemen's associations, Ann became better known, with newspapers, as well as friends, dubbing her "Queen" Ann Bassett. In early 1897, Bassett joined Cassidy at Robbers Roost. Elzy Lay, having ended his relationship with Josie Bassett, joined them with his girlfriend and future wife Maude Davis. According to reports of the day, Bassett and Davis were two of only five women ever allowed into the Robbers Roost hideout, the other three being Josie Bassett, the Sundance Kid's girlfriend Etta Place, and Wild Bunch gang member Laura Bullion.

By April, 1897, the two women were sent home so Cassidy and his gang could concentrate on their next robbery. Cassidy continued his romantic involvement with Bassett off and on for another four years, seeing her whenever he was near her ranch. The total length of their relationship was around seven years, but was interrupted often with his being away, and for an 18-month period when he was in prison starting in 1894, during which time she was involved with Ben Kilpatrick.

By 1903, Bassett had married a rancher by the name of Hyrum "Hi" Henry Bernard.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Shortly after the marriage, she was arrested for cattle rustling. She stood trial, but was acquitted and released. The marriage lasted six years, ending in divorce, with Bernard helping Bassett and her sister Josie in maintaining their ranch.

By 1904, most of the outlaws associated with the Bassett girls were either dead or had been captured by lawmen. Ann Bassett never saw Cassidy again after he first departed for South America. Several other outlaws from lesser-known gangs drifted in and out of the ranch, usually visiting only to obtain

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beef or fresh horses, and have a place to stay for a few days. Elzy Lay reportedly visited the ranch again in 1906, shortly after his release from prison, before moving on to California, where he lived out the remainder of his life as a respectable businessman. Herb Bassett died on July 30, 1918.

Later life Ann Bassett remarried in 1928 to cattleman Frank Willis. The couple remained in Utah, where they maintained a ranch. She remained there for the rest of her life. Willis reportedly loved her dearly, and the two worked closely together in their business. Before she died, she requested that she be cremated, and that her remains be spread across her hometown in northern Utah. However, Willis is alleged to have grieved greatly over her death, and was unable to complete that task, keeping her ashes in his car for the remainder of his life. When he died in 1963, friends and family were the ones who buried her ashes in an undisclosed area in Browns Park.

Alleged Ann Bassett–Etta Place connection Ann Bassett and Etta Place, the girlfriend of the Sundance Kid, have often been alleged to have been the same person. In spite of enthusiastic efforts to conflate them as one and the same, evidence confirms that Bassett was under arrest for cattle rustling in Utah while Place was in South America with Cassidy and Longabaugh in 1903.

Still, some speculators insist Bassett led a double life, dating Cassidy as Ann Bassett, and the Sundance Kid as Etta Place. Reports by the Pinkerton National Detective Agency provide almost identical descriptions of both women, describing them as having classic good looks, articulate speech and intelligence, the same hair color, as being good with a rifle and riding a horse, and being very promiscuous for the period, both having openly taken several lovers in a period when one did not generally flaunt such relationships. This would mean that at some point she was involved with both outlaws at the same time, apparently with their full knowledge, but by 1900, when in their company, she simply went by the name of Etta Place. Place mysteriously disappears from all public records in 1909, not long after the death of the Sundance Kid.

When comparing the best legitimate photograph of Place with the best photograph of Bassett, it appears that at least, the women could have been mistaken for one another. Both are pretty, with similar facial features, hair color, and physical build. Michael Rutters' book *Bad Girls* details how Bassett often faked a New England accent in order to appear more cultured. Similarly, Place was said to have indicated that she was from the East Coast, though she never revealed an exact location. Stronger evidence comes from Dr. Thomas G. Kyle

of the Computer Research Group at Los Alamos National Laboratory, who has previously performed many such comparisons for government intelligence agencies. He conducted a series of tests on photographs of Etta Place and Ann Bassett. Their features matched and both had the same scar or cowlick at the top of their forehead. He concluded that there could be no reasonable doubt that they were the same person.[3]

Author and researcher Doris Karren Burton indicates in her 1992 book *Queen Ann Bassett: Alias Etta Place* that when Bassett is absent from historical records, Place is actively traveling with Cassidy and the Sundance Kid/Harry Longabaugh, and when Place is absent from historical records, Bassett is visible.[4]

However, Burton did not account for documented instances showing Bassett to have been in the United States at the same time that Etta Place was known to have been in South America. Bassett was under arrest for cattle rustling in Utah while Place, who had departed for South America with [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ann\\_Bassett](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ann_Bassett) 3/4

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Longabaugh in August, 1902, was there with Cassidy and Longabaugh until returning to the United States (via New York City) in the summer of 1904. In 1903 alone Bassett was married, incarcerated, tried, and released over a span of several months. Further, Bassett never claimed to have been Etta Place, even in her memoirs.

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External links Ann Bassett brief bio (<https://www.legendsofamerica.com/anne-bassett/>) Ann Bassett (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/7919122>) at Find a Grave

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7/27/23, 9:29 PM Ann Bassett – Riding With the Wild Bunch – Legends of America

## Ann Bassett – Riding With the Wild Bunch

What's New Woolworth Stores Across the World Padouca Indians John C. McCoy – Founder of Westp Missouri The Great Pennsylvania Railroad Sy Sylvan Grove, Kansas (LOK) Allison J. Pliley (LOK) Silkville, Kansas – Failed Utopia (LO Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Railroad Junius George Groves – Potato King (LOK) Lots more what's new..

### Ann Bassett

Ann Bassett was a prominent rancher in Brown's Hole, Colorado, who, along with her sister, Josie, was an associate of outlaws, particularly Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch.

Ann was born to Herb and Elizabeth Chamberlain Basset, who owned a ranch in an isolated area of Brown's Hole, near the Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah border on May 12, 1878. She was the first white girl to be born in Brown's Hole.

This area had acquired a reputation as a haven for cattle rustlers, horse thieves, and outlaws, alongside Hole-in-the-Wall, Wyoming, and Robbers Roost in Utah. For decades stolen horses and cattle were trailed through the area to thriving mining camps in Eastern Colorado.

Herb Basset was known to have done business with outlaws, such as Butch Cassidy, Harvey "Kid Curry" Logan, and Black Jack Ketchum, selling horses, beef, and supplies.

Both Ann and Josie Bassett were attractive young women who were well educated in prominent boarding schools. Their father also taught them to ride, rope, and shoot.

### Bassett Cabin, Brown's Hole

Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch were frequent visitors to the ranch and often courted Anne and her sister Josie, who they found attractive, intelligent, and articulate. By the time Ann Bassett was 15, she had become

<https://www.legendsofamerica.com/anne-bassett/> 2/3

7/27/23, 9:29 PM Ann Bassett – Riding With the Wild Bunch – Legends of America involved romantically with Butch Cassidy. Her sister Josie was involved with Elza Lay. Outlaws Ben Kilpatrick and Will "News" Carver, both later members of the Wild Bunch gang, also dated the sisters.

Anne's father was an unassuming man who allowed his wife, Elizabeth, to run the ranch. During this time, several large cattle barons wanted to take over Brown's Hole, and Ann's mother, amid a feud with the prominent cattlemen, began to do a little cattle rustling of her own. As Ann grew up, she took up her mother's feud against the cattle barons, especially against the Two Bar Ranch. Helping herself freely to their cattle, she was soon dubbed the "Queen of the Rustlers."



When rumors began to fly that Ann and her mother were intentionally running Two Bar cattle over the cliffs out of spite, the cattle barons hired Tom Horn to infiltrate Brown's Hole. After warning Matt Rush, Isom Dart, and other ranchers to leave the area, he shot and killed the two men when they refused to vacate.

When Ann Married H. Bernard, the manager of the Two Bar Ranch, he was quickly fired. The marriage lasted six years. When Ann was caught rusting cattle from the "enemy" ranch, she was tried but acquitted. In 1928, Ann married a man Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch, named Frank Willis, and the two settled in a small December 1900 southwestern Utah town where she lived until her death at the age of 78. Over the years, many believed that Ann Basset and Etta Place were the same women; however, most historians have discounted these allegations.

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7/27/23, 9:29 PM Etta Place - Wikipedia

Etta Place Etta Place (b. c. 1878, d. ?) was a companion of the American outlaws Robert LeRoy Parker, alias Butch Cassidy, and Harry Etta Place Alonzo Longabaugh, alias Sundance Kid. The three were members of the outlaw gang known as Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch. She was principally the companion of Longabaugh. Little is known about her; both her origin and her fate remain unknown.

The Pinkerton Detective Agency described her, in 1906, as having, "classic good looks, 27 or 28 years old, 5'4" to 5'5" [163–165 cm] in height, weighing between 110 and 115 lb [50 and 52 kg], with a medium build and brown hair."

Life with Sundance Kid According to a memorandum from the Pinkerton Detective Agency, dated July 29, 1902, she was "said ... to be from Texas", and in another Pinkerton document dated 1906, she is described as being, "27 to 28 years old", placing her birth in 1877, 1878 or 1879. A hospital staff record from Denver, where she received Harry Longabaugh (the Sundance treatment in May 1900, reports her age as "22 or 23", putting her Kid) and Etta Place, just before they birth year at 1877 or 1878. sailed for South America.

Like Etta Place's history, her name is somewhat ambiguous. Born c. 1878 "Place" was the maiden surname of Longabaugh's mother (Annie East Coast, U.S. Place), and she is recorded in various sources as Mrs. Harry (alleged) Longabaugh or Mrs. Harry A. Place. In the one instance where she Disappeared July 31, 1909 is known to have signed her name, she did so as "Mrs. Ethel (aged 30–31) Place". The Pinkertons called her "Ethel", "Ethal", "Eva", and Antofagasta, Chile "Rita" before finally settling on "Etta" for its wanted posters.[1] Her name may have become "Etta" after she moved to South Status Fate unknown America, where Spanish speakers had trouble pronouncing Other names Ethel Place "Ethel". Occupation(s) Teacher, outlaw In February 1901, Etta Place accompanied Longabaugh to New Partner Harry Longabaugh York City, where at Tiffany's jewelers they purchased a lapel (1899–1906) watch and stickpin, and posed for the now-famous DeYoung portrait at a studio in Union Square on Broadway. It is one of only two known images of her. On February 20, 1901, she sailed with Longabaugh and Parker (who was now posing as "James Ryan," her fictional brother), aboard the British ship *Herminius* for Buenos Aires.

There, she settled with the two outlaws on a ranch they had purchased near Cholila in the Chubut Province of southwest Argentina, living in a four-room log cabin on the east bank of the Blanco River. Under a new 1884 law, they were granted 15,000 acres (61 km<sup>2</sup>) of adjacent land to develop, 2,500 of which belonged to Place, who has the distinction of being the first woman in Argentina to acquire land under the new act, as land ownership had previously been denied to women. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etta\\_Place](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etta_Place) 1/6

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On March 3, 1902, she returned with Longabaugh to New York City on the SS *Soldier Prince*, probably to visit family and friends in the United States. On April 2, they registered at a Mrs. Thompson's rooming house in New York City. They toured Coney Island and visited his family (originally from Mont Clare, Pennsylvania, but by then living in Atlantic City, New Jersey). They also possibly traveled to a Dr. Pierce's Invalid Hotel in Buffalo, New York, for unspecified medical treatment. They then traveled west, where again they sought medical treatment, this time in Denver, Colorado. They returned to Buenos Aires from New York on July 10, 1902, aboard the steamer *Honorius*, posing as stewards. On August 9, she was with Longabaugh at the Hotel Europa in Buenos Aires, and on the 15th, she sailed with him aboard the steamer SS *Chubut* to return to their ranch.

In the summer of 1904, she made another visit with Longabaugh to the United States, where the Pinkerton Detective Agency traced them to Fort Worth, Texas, and to the St. Louis World Fair, but failed to arrest them before they returned to Argentina. In early 1905, the trio sold the Cholila ranch, as once again the law was beginning to catch up with them. The Pinkerton Agency had known their precise address for months, but the rainy season prevented their assigned agent, Frank Dimaio, from traveling there and making an arrest. Governor Julio

Lezana issued an arrest warrant, but before it could be executed, Sheriff Edward Humphreys, a Welsh Argentinian who was friendly with Parker and enamored of Place, tipped them off. The trio fled north to San Carlos de Bariloche, where they embarked on the steamer Condor across Lake Nahuel Huapi and into Chile.

By the end of that year, however, they were back in Argentina. On December 19, 1904, Place took part, along with Longabaugh, Parker, and an unknown male, in the robbery of the Banco de la Nacion in Villa Mercedes, 400 miles west of Buenos Aires. Pursued by armed lawmen, they crossed the Pampas and the Andes and again into Chile.

Place had long been tired of life on the run, and deeply lamented the loss of their ranch. At her request, on June 30, 1906, Longabaugh accompanied her from Valparaiso, Chile, to San Francisco, where she apparently remained, while he returned permanently to South America. After that parting, there is no evidence that Longabaugh and Place ever saw one another again.

Mysteries Those who had met Place claimed the first thing they noticed about her was that she was strikingly pretty, with a very nice smile, and that she was cordial, articulate, refined in speech and manners, and an excellent shot with a rifle. She was said to have spoken in an educated manner, and she indicated she was originally from the East Coast, although she never revealed an exact location.

Years later, eyewitnesses said that Place was one of only five women known to have been allowed into the Wild Bunch hideout at Robbers Roost in southern Utah, the other four having been Will Carver's girlfriend Josie Bassett, who also was involved with Parker for a time; Josie's sister and Parker's longtime girlfriend Ann Bassett; Elzy Lay's girlfriend Maude Davis; and gang member Laura Bullion. Place was believed to have once been married to a schoolteacher, and at least one person claimed Place herself was a teacher who abandoned her husband and two children to be with Longabaugh. It has also been speculated that she met the gang while working as a prostitute and was originally Parker's lover, and became involved with Longabaugh later, but no direct evidence of this has been found. She may have met Parker and/or Longabaugh in the brothel of Madame Fannie Porter in San Antonio, which was frequented by members of the Wild Bunch gang. Several gang members met

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girlfriends at Madame Porter's, who later traveled with them, including Kid Curry and Della Moore, a prostitute, and Will Carver and Lillie Davis. Wild Bunch female gang member Laura Bullion is believed to have worked at the brothel from time to time.[2]

Identity theories

Ethel Bishop

Place's real name has been suggested to be Ethel Bishop. Such a woman lived at another brothel, at 212 Concho Street, around the corner from Madame Porter's. On the 1900 census, Bishop's occupation was given as "unemployed music teacher". Born in West Virginia in September 1876, she was 23 at the time. The Ethel Bishop hypothesis combines the claim that she was a schoolteacher with the one that she was a prostitute.[3]

#### Ann Bassett

Another conjecture is that she was a cattle rustler named Ann Bassett (1878–1956), who knew and ran with the Wild Bunch at the turn of the 20th century. Both Bassett and Place were attractive women, with similar facial features, body frame, and hair color. Bassett was born in 1878, the same year Place was thought to have been born. Dr. Thomas G. Kyle of the Computer Research Group at Los Alamos National Laboratory, who performed many photographic comparisons for government intelligence agencies, conducted a series of tests on photographs of Etta Place and Ann Bassett. Both had the same scar or cowlick at the top of their forehead. Dr. Kyle concluded that there could be no reasonable doubt they were the same person.[4] Historian Doris Karren Burton also investigated the lives of both women and published a book in 1992 claiming they were one and the same.[5]

However, Bassett and Place's chronologies do not align. Several documents prove that Bassett was in Wyoming during much of the time when Place was in South America. Bassett was arrested and briefly incarcerated in Utah for rustling cattle in 1903, while Place was in South America with Longabaugh and Parker. Bassett also married her first husband in Utah that year, so could not have been in South America during that time.[6]

#### Eunice Gray

A once-popular theory held that she was Eunice Gray, who for many years operated a brothel in Fort Worth, and later ran the Waco Hotel there until she died in a fire in January 1962. Gray once told Delbert Willis of the Fort Worth Press, "I've lived in Fort Worth since 1901. That is except for the time I had to high-tail it out of town. Went to South America for a few years ... until things settled down." Willis conceded that Gray never claimed to be Etta Place; he merely made that connection on his own, given the similarities in their ages, and the period in which Gray said she was in South America coinciding with Place's time there. Gray was described as a beautiful woman, and Willis believed that Place and Gray held a striking resemblance to one another, but no photographs of Gray from that period are available to compare with Place's. In 2007, amateur genealogist Donna Donnell found Eunice Gray on a 1911 passenger list from Panama. Following that lead, she tracked down Gray's

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etta\\_Place](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etta_Place) 3/6

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niece, who had two photographs of her; one was taken at her high-school graduation circa 1896, and another from sometime in the 1920s. Comparing those photos to Place's, both agreed that Eunice Gray was definitely not Etta Place.[7]

#### Life after Longabaugh

Considerable debate still remains over when Place's relationship with Longabaugh ended. Some claims indicate that Place ended her relationship with Longabaugh and returned to the United States before his death. Others believe that the two remained romantically involved, and that she simply tired of life in South America. By 1907, she was known to have been living in San Francisco, but after that, she vanished without a trace.

In 1909, a woman matching Place's description asked Frank Aller (US vice consul in Antofagasta, Chile) for assistance in obtaining a death certificate for Longabaugh. No such certificate was issued, and the woman's identity was never ascertained.[8]

Author Richard Llewellyn claimed that while in Argentina, he found indications that Place had moved to Paraguay following the death of Longabaugh, and that she had married a wealthy man. Also, rumors arose that Etta Place was in fact Edith Mae, wife of famous boxing promoter Tex Rickard, who retired to a ranch in Paraguay shortly after promoting the famous fight between Jack Johnson and Jim Jeffries in 1910.

A Pinkerton report states that a woman matching Place's description was killed in a shootout resulting from a domestic dispute with a man named Mateo Gebhart in Chubut, Argentina, in March 1922. Another report claims she committed suicide in 1924 in Argentina, and yet another states that she died of natural causes in 1966.

Various additional claims have been made about her life after the death of Longabaugh. Some believe that she returned to New York City, while other theories suggest she moved back to Texas and started a new life there. One claim is that she returned to her life as a schoolteacher, living the remainder of her life in Denver, Colorado, and another story says she lived the remainder of her life teaching in Marion, Oregon. Also various claims contend that she returned to prostitution, living the remainder of her life in Texas, California, or New York, but these claims are mere speculation, without any supporting evidence.

Researcher Larry Pointer, author of the 1977 book *In Search of Butch Cassidy*, wrote that Place's identity and fate are "one of the most intriguing riddles in western history. Leads develop only to dissolve into ambiguity." [9]

Fact timelines generally accepted by historians 1899–1900: Place was living in Texas and being courted by Harry A. Longabaugh, also known as the Sundance Kid. Some stories claim Place was a housekeeper or possibly a prostitute in Fannie Porter's sporting house during this time. December 1900: Place and Longabaugh reportedly marry, he using the alias Harry A. Place, shortly

after he is photographed in the famous Fort Worth Five photo. No record of the marriage is known to exist. January 1901: Longabaugh and Place visit his family in Mont Clare, Pennsylvania. February 1901: Longabaugh and Place visit New York City and Tiffany's Jewelers. February 20, 1901: Longabaugh and Place board the RMS Herminius bound for Buenos Aires. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etta\\_Place](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etta_Place) 4/6

7/27/23, 9:29 PM Etta Place - Wikipedia

March 3, 1902: Longabaugh and Place sail on the ship S.S. Soldier Prince from Argentina to New York City. Pinkerton detectives find evidence that Place was homesick and wanting to visit her family, but were unable to identify who her family was. April 2, 1902: Longabaugh and Place register at Mrs. Thompson's Boarding House in New York City, and visit members of his family in Atlantic City, New Jersey, then visit Coney Island. July 10, 1902: Place and Longabaugh pose as stewards and sail on the steamer Honorus back to Argentina. August 9, 1902: Place registers them at the Hotel Europa in Buenos Aires. Early to late 1903: Parker's former lover Ann Bassett marries a rancher by the name of Henry Bernard, and shortly thereafter is arrested for rustling. Summer 1904: Place and Longabaugh sail again to New York City to visit her family. Once again Pinkerton detectives discover she is homesick, but cannot discover the identity of her family. May 1, 1905: Place, Longabaugh, and Parker decide to sell their ranch in Cholila, Argentina, and leave South America to avoid the law there. Longabaugh and Place sail to San Francisco, where she remains, and he returns to South America. 1907: Place is living alone in San Francisco, and there is no evidence she has seen Longabaugh since his departure two years prior. July 31, 1909: A woman matching Place's description attempts to obtain a death certificate following Longabaugh's death in Bolivia so that she can settle his estate. She disappears from all historical records after that. With Longabaugh dead, Pinkerton's interest in her location wanes, and her trail goes cold.

Media depictions In the 1969 film *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, Etta Place is depicted as a schoolteacher. Screenwriter William Goldman was suspicious of claims that Place was a prostitute; he believed she was too attractive and vibrant to have worked as a prostitute, a profession that tended to age women prematurely and tax their health.[10] Place was portrayed in the film by Katharine Ross. Elizabeth Montgomery portrayed Etta Place in *Mrs. Sundance*, a highly fictionalized 1974 television movie.[11] Katharine Ross reprised her role as Etta Place in *Wanted: The Sundance Woman*, a fictionalized 1976 made-for-television movie.[12] In the 1994 TV movie *The Gambler V: Playing for Keeps*, Etta Place is played by Mariska Hargitay. In the 2004 TV movie *The Legend of Butch & Sundance*, Rachelle Lefevre portrays Etta Place. Etta Place was played by Dominique McElligott in the 2011 film *Blackthorn*. Etta Place was the central character in *Etta: A Novel* by Gerald Kolpan, published in 2009 by Ballantine Books.[13]

See also *Outlaws American Old West*

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Further reading Answer Man: Mysterious Etta Place by Chuck Parsons

External links Etta Place (<https://web.archive.org/web/20080216070245/http://www.sundancekidhenrylong.com>) at Sundance Kid and Henry Long

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etta\\_Place](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etta_Place) 6/6

7/27/23, 9:31 PM Josephine "Josie" Bassett Morris (1874-1964) - Find a Grave Memorial

Josephine "Josie" Bassett Morris BIRTH 17 Jan 1874 Rockport, Hot Spring County, Arkansas, USA

DEATH 28 May 1964 (aged 90) Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah, USA

BURIAL Bassett Cemetery Maybell, Moffat County, Colorado, USA

MEMORIAL ID 74411798

Photo added by Zappa Married 5 times, once to James MacKnight. Rumored to be a one-time sweetheart of Butch Cassidy.

Josie Bassett was a female rancher. She and her sister "Queen" Ann Bassett are known for their love affairs and associations with well known outlaws, Added by Pilgrims Patriots Pioneers particularly Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch. Josie Bassett was born the first of two girls, to Herb Bassett and Elizabeth Chamberlain Bassett, in Arkansas on January 17, 1874. When she was still a young girl, her parents moved to a ranch spanning the tri-state borders of Utah, Wyoming and Colorado. She and her sister were taught to rope, ride, and shoot at a young age. Both girls were sent to prominent boarding schools in their youth, but both chose to return to the ranching life by their teen years. Herb Bassett was well known to many of the famous outlaws of the day, as he did business with them often, supplying them with beef and fresh horses. Among those who visited the Bassett ranch were "Black Jack" Ketchum, Added by Grave Tag'r Butch Cassidy, Elzy Lay, Kid Curry, Will "News" Carver and Ben Kilpatrick. With these notable outlaws coming often to the ranch, both Ann and Josie were first exposed to outlaws. Josie and Ann were extremely good looking young women, and both had a wild side. By 1893, Ann Bassett was involved romantically with Butch Cassidy, and Josie was involved with Elzy Lay, Cassidy's closest friend. When Cassidy was sent away to prison for eighteen months, starting in 1894, Ann became involved in a relationship with Ben Kilpatrick. By the time Cassidy was released, Will "News" Carver had become involved with Josie, who ended their relationship when Carver became involved with female outlaw Laura Bullion. Josie in turn became involved with Cassidy for a time, until

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7/27/23, 9:31 PM Josephine "Josie" Bassett Morris (1874-1964) - Find a Grave Memorial

Cassidy again became involved with Ann. That was the complicated circle of relationships that developed between the Bassett girls and Cassidy's Wild Bunch gang. Despite the seemingly constant changes in romantic companions by both the Bassett girls and the gang members, there is no indication that any animosity ever resulted from it. Josie Bassett was reportedly one of only five women who were ever allowed into the outlaw hideout called "Robbers Roost", located in the rough Utah terrain, the others being her sister Ann, the Sundance Kid's girlfriend Etta Place, Elzy Lay's wife Maude Davis, and Will "News" Carver's girl, Laura Bullion. Those outlaw relationships, as well as the Bassett ranch supplying beef and horses to the gang, assisted the sisters in their time of need. In 1896, several powerful and wealthy cattlemen approached the Bassetts to sell their ranch. When the sisters refused, the cattlemen's association



began hiring cowboys to harass the sisters, stampeding their cattle and rustling. The sisters in turn began to rustle cattle from the cattlemen. Although the cattlemen's association dispatched cowboys to harass the sisters, and intimidate them into selling, the cowboys rarely followed through with the acts for fear of retribution from the outlaws the sisters were known to associate with. One legend indicates that Kid Curry, easily the most feared of the Wild Bunch gang, approached several of the cowboys known to work for the cattlemen, and warned them to leave the Bassetts alone. That story cannot be confirmed, but what is certain is that by 1899, the sisters were receiving very little pressure to sell. As time passed, the Wild Bunch gang eventually faded. By 1904, most of the gang members closest to the Bassett girls had either been killed or captured. Her former lover, Wild Bunch gang member Elzy Lay, reportedly visited Ann and Josie at the ranch shortly after his release from prison in 1906, before he moved on California where he lived out the remainder of his life as a respectable businessman. Although he is reported to have been killed in Bolivia, Josie claimed that Butch Cassidy visited her in 1930 and lived in Utah until the late 40s. Josie Bassett lived most of her life on her father's property, operating the ranch, and choosing a mostly outdoor life, with camping, fishing and hunting being her primary hobbies. She married five times over the course of her lifetime. She divorced four of her husbands, allegedly running one off with a frying pan. A fifth husband died, reportedly of alcoholism, but rumors persist that Josie poisoned him.[citation needed] With one husband, Carl McKnight, Bassett had two sons, Crawford McKnight and Herbert "Chick" McKnight. In 1913 she moved to a homestead near Vernal, Utah, and made a new ranch there her lifetime commitment. In 1924, Crawford helped her build a new cabin on this property.

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7/27/23, 9:31 PM Josephine "Josie" Bassett Morris (1874-1964) - Find a Grave Memorial

During the Great Depression, she supplied food to others in the area, particularly with supplies of beef. She made her own soap, sewed her own clothing, and became known for her prowess at hunting deer, which she often did not only for her own family but to help feed less fortunate neighbors. In one instance, a Game Warden stopped by her cabin announcing that he was there to arrest her for poaching. She confessed that she had just killed a deer and took him to the carcass. The game warden was joking with her and took no action. During the Prohibition years, Josie made and sold bootlegged whiskey but she was never arrested. Years after prohibition, she continued to make her own brandy and whiskey until she was finally warned that revenue agents were looking for her still and her son threatened to break it up. In 1936, rancher and former adversary Jim Robinson accused her of butchering his cattle, and selling it in town. Six other ranchers joined in on the accusations. Hides from the carcasses were found on her property. Bassett was arrested. She claimed the evidence was planted. Several neighbors supplied her with bail money until her trial. She

was tried twice, both ending in a hung jury. After the second trial, the local prosecutor dropped the charges. In 1945, she fell victim to a land scheme, and lost most of her land. However, she lived frugally in her cabin and supported herself well into her 80s. In later life, she became an eccentric, and talked often with neighbors about the wild days and her associations with outlaws. In 1963, she fell when a horse knocked her down, breaking her hip. She died a few months later at the age of 90. She was the last remaining associate of the Wild Bunch gang, and the last direct source of information about its members, their personalities, traits and demeanors. \*\*\*\*\* Josephine "Josie" Bassett reportedly married 5 times.

Married James Feelding (Fielding?) McKnight 1892 Utah. Memorial #69936637. Believe they had 2 sons: Crawford George McKnight, born July 12, 1892 Colorado and Amos Herbert McKnight, born April 14, 1894 Colorado.

Married Carl McKnight, date unknown. Some reports found say that Carl was the father of the 2 sons but dates do not coincide to support that. Cannot find any information about Carl McKnight.

Married Charles Allen Ranney May 1, 1902 Craig, Moffat, Colorado; no children. Memorial #3094797.

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Married Emerson Wells July 29, 1909 Meeker, Rio Blanco, Colorado; no children. Memorial #20438212.

Married M B Ben Morris November 22, 1913 Uintah, Utah; no children. (M.B born 1879 Pennsylvania)

Found in the 1880 census at Greenriver, Sweetwater, Wyoming: A. H. Bassett 47, Eliza 23, Josie 6, Samuel 4, Annie 2

Found in the 1885 census at Colorado: Amos H Bassett, head, Eliza, Josie, Samuel C, Annie, George

Found in the June 1st, 1900 census at Elk River, Routt, Colorado: Josie McKnight 26, George C Mc Knight 7 Son, Herbert Mc Knight 6 Son \*\*\*Counted as the next family after her father and sister in the 1900 census, they either lived on the same ranch or next to each other? Amos Bassett 66, widowed, b July 1833, Anna M daughter 22, single, b May 1878.

Found in the 1900 - 1910 censuses at Browns Park, Routt, Colorado: 1900; James McKnight 30, Jossie McKnight 26, Loudon Ronney 41 Help. Farmer.

1910: A H Bassett 75, Samuel C 73 brother, Crawford McKnight 17 grandson, Herbert McKnight 15 grandson, Emerson Wells 38 son in law, Joise Wells daughter

Found in the 1920 census Riverdale, Uintah, Utah: Josie M Morris 45, widowed, Herbert B Morris 24 Son, wrong surname for Herbert

Found in the 1930 census at Jensen, Uintah, Utah: Josie Morris age 55, married

Found in the 1940 census at Riverdale, Uintah, Utah : Josie Morris 68 Head, Eam Scott 23 Hired Help. Says she had 4 years of high school and was divorced. Contributor: Deidre Badker (47589104) • Family Members Parents Amos Herbert Bassett 1834–1918

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Mary Elizabeth Chamberlain Bassett 1855–1892

Spouses James Fielding McKnight 1869–1923 (m. 1893)

Charles Allan Ranney 1867–1937 (m. 1902)

Emerson Wells 1872–1913 (m. 1909)

Siblings Samuel Clark Bassett 1875–1938

Ann Bassett 1878–1956

Elbert Bassett 1880–1925

George Crawford Bassett 1884–1951

Children Crawford George MacKnight 1893–1980

Amos Herbert McKnight 1895–1967

Maintained by: Mayflower Pilgrim 332 Originally Created by: Betty Gower  
Added: 4 Aug 2011 Find a Grave Memorial ID: 74411798

Find a Grave, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/74411798/josephine-morris>: accessed 27 July 2023), memorial page for Josephine “Josie” Bassett Morris (17 Jan 1874–28 May 1964), Find a Grave Memorial ID 74411798, citing Bassett Cemetery, Maybell, Moffat

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/74411798/josephine-morris> 5/6

7/27/23, 9:24 PM Josie Bassett - Wikipedia

Josie Bassett Josie Bassett (January 17, 1874 – May 1, 1964) was a rancher. She and her sister “Queen” Ann Bassett are known for their love Josie Bassett affairs and associations with well-known outlaws, particularly Born Josephine Bassett Butch Cassidy’s “Wild Bunch”. January 17, 1874 Hot Springs, Early life Arkansas Died May 1, 1964 Josie Bassett was born the first of two girls to Herb Bassett and (aged 90) Mary Eliza Chamberlain (Elizabeth) Bassett in Arkansas on Jensen, Uintah January 17, 1874. When she was still a young girl, her parents County, Utah moved to a ranch spanning the borders of Utah, Wyoming and

Resting Bassett Cemetery Colorado. She and her sister were taught to rope, ride, and shoot at a young age. Both girls were sent to prominent boarding place 40°47 29.04 N schools in their youth, but both chose to return to the ranching 108°50 44.88 W life by their teen years. Nationality American

Herb Bassett was well known to many of the famous outlaws of Other names Josie Bassett Morris the day as he did business with them often, supplying them with Occupations Western Rancher beef and fresh horses. Among those who visited the Bassett ranch Cattle Rustler were "Black Jack" Ketchum, Butch Cassidy, Elzy Lay, Kid Curry, Will "News" Carver and Ben Kilpatrick. With these notable Bootlegger outlaws coming often to the ranch, both Ann and Josie were first Known for Association with exposed to outlaws. outlaws such as Butch Cassidy's Wild Association with outlaws Bunch Romantically Josie and Ann were good looking young women, and both had a involved with Elzy wild side. By 1893, Ann Bassett was involved romantically with Lay and Will "News" Butch Cassidy, and Josie was involved with Elzy Lay, Cassidy's Carver closest friend. When Cassidy was sent to prison for 18 months, starting in 1894, Ann became involved in a relationship with Ben Claimed Butch Kilpatrick. By the time Cassidy was released, Will "News" Carver Cassidy visited in had become involved with Josie, who ended their relationship 1930 and lived in when Carver became involved with female outlaw Laura Bullion. Utah until the late Josie in turn became involved with Cassidy until Cassidy again 1940s became involved with Ann. Spouses Jim McKnight That was the complicated circle of relationships that developed Carl McKnight between the Bassett girls and Cassidy's Wild Bunch gang. Despite the seemingly constant changes in romantic companions by both Emerson Wells the Bassett girls and the gang members, there is no indication that M.B. "Ben" Morris any animosity ever resulted from it. Children Crawford McKnight

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7/27/23, 9:24 PM Josie Bassett - Wikipedia

Josie Bassett was reportedly one of only five women who were Herbert "Chick" allowed into the outlaw hideout called "Robbers Roost", located in McKnight Utah; the others were her sister Ann, the Sundance Kid's girlfriend Etta Place, Elzy Lay's wife Maude Davis, and Will Parents Amos Herbert "News" Carver's girl Laura Bullion. Bassett Mary Elizabeth Those outlaw relationships, as well as the Bassett ranch's supply Chamberlin Miller of beef and horses to the gang, assisted the sisters in their time of need. In 1896, several powerful and wealthy cattlemen Relatives Ann Bassett (sister) approached the Bassetts to sell their ranch. When the sisters refused, the cattlemen's association began hiring cowboys to harass the sisters, stampeding their cattle and rustling. The sisters in turn began to rustle cattle from the cattlemen.

Although the cattlemen's association dispatched cowboys to harass the sisters and intimidate them into selling, the cowboys rarely followed through with the acts for fear of retribution from the outlaws with whom the sisters were known

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Josie Bassett lived most of her life on her father's property, operating the ranch and leading a mostly outdoor life, with camping, fishing and hunting as her primary hobbies. She married five times over the course of her lifetime. She divorced four of her husbands, allegedly running one off with a frying pan. A fifth husband died, reportedly of alcoholism, but rumors persist that Josie poisoned him. With one husband, Carl McKnight, Bassett had two sons: Crawford McKnight and Herbert "Chick" McKnight.

In 1913, she moved to a homestead near Vernal, Utah, and made a new ranch there her lifetime commitment. In 1924, Crawford helped her build a new cabin on this property.

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7/27/23, 9:24 PM Josie Bassett - Wikipedia

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See also Josie Bassett Morris Ranch Complex

External links Ann Bassett brief bio ([http://www.legendsofamerica.com/WE-WomenList.html#Laura%20Bullion,%20aka:%20Della%20Rose%20\(1876-19\)\)](http://www.legendsofamerica.com/WE-WomenList.html#Laura%20Bullion,%20aka:%20Della%20Rose%20(1876-19)))) Butch Cassidy timeline (<http://www.butchandsundance.com/timeline.htm>) Wild Bunch, Elzy Lay (<http://www.butchandsundance.com/players/elzylay.htm>) Josie Bassett Cabin (<http://www.hodgman.org/travel/dino-2000/dnm-cabin.html>) Personal Interview with Josie Bassett where she claims to have seen Butch Cassidy as an old man (<http://amberandchaos.net/?p=25>) "Josie Bassett" (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/70625145>). Female Rancher. Find a Grave. May 30, 2011. Retrieved December 22, 2015.

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7/27/23, 9:25 PM Josie Bassett – A Life Untamed - The History Junkie

Josie Bassett – A Life Untamed

Josie Bassett, sister of Ann Bassett, was a successful wild west rancher. She is known for her romantic involvement with well-known outlaws such as Butch Cassidy and Elzy Lay.

Later in life, she spoke of her association with the gang and was the last remaining connection to Butch Cassidy's gang to die.

Early Years Josie was the first girl born to Herb Bassett and Mary Eliza Chamberlain in Arkansas on January 17, 1874.

When she was young her father moved the family to a ranch located on the border of Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado. She and her sister were taught to rope, ride, and shoot at a young age and they preferred that life over other responsibilities that were given to women during that time.

She and her sister were seen as attractive young ladies which attracted young men. Her father's dealing with famous gunslingers and outlaws during the old west meant that the attractive young ladies were put in front of young outlaws.

<https://thehistoryjunkie.com/josie-bassett-a-life-untamed/> 1/7

7/27/23, 9:25 PM Josie Bassett – A Life Untamed - The History Junkie

The girl's parents sent them to an excellent boarding school where they were also given a formal education. By the time Josie Bassett was a young adult she was well versed in ranching and liberal arts but opted to become a rancher.

As said previously, Herb Bassett did much business with outlaws. He often supplied them with beef and fresh horses in exchange for money. Some of the more notable outlaws were: Butch Cassidy, "Black Jack" Ketchum, Elzy Lay, Will "News" Carter, and Ben Kilpatrick.

**Outlaw Romance** In 1896, the Bassett's became involved in a feud with other cattle barons of the area. The Bassett's refused to sell their ranch to the barons which resulted in the barons rustling cattle from them.

In response, the Bassett's began rustling cattle from them which resulted in the barons hiring Tom Horn to deal with the rustlers. While he did deal with some of the rustlers in the area there were no actions taken against the Bassett family.

However, by 1896 the girls had begun to become romantically involved with many notorious outlaws.

Josie Bassett became involved with Elzy Lay and shortly after his release from an 18th-month prison sentence Butch Cassidy. She later became involved with Will "News" Carver.

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Ann also had a relationship with Butch Cassidy before and after her sister did. She was also involved with Ben Kilpatrick. Her relationship with Cassidy would be on and off again for several years. He even brought her and her sister to their notorious hidden hideout, Robbers Roost.

These relationships with notorious outlaws put the two sisters in a position to deal with the cattlemen who were pressing them to sell the ranch. They would often exchange beef and fresh horses for protection.

This association was a deterrent that kept cowboys hired to harass the sisters from doing so, for fear of retribution from the outlaws. There was a report that Kid Curry, the most feared member of the Wild Bunch gang, once paid a visit to several cowboys known to be employed by the cattlemen, warning them to leave the Bassetts alone.

Despite the seemingly constant changes in romantic partners by both the Bassett sisters and the gang members, there is no report of there being any animosity as a result of this.

**Later Years**

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As the years went by the outlaws that Josie and Ann knew continued to reach their fates. Some were killed, some disappeared, and some turned from the life of an outlaw.

Elzy Lay visited the Bassett girls in 1906 and then moved to California and became a respectable businessman.

Josie claimed that Butch Cassidy visited her in 1930 and lived in Utah until the late 1940s until his death. This is disputed since it is believed he died in South America.

Josie tried to live a traditional life but she was unable. She lived at her father's ranch and operated many of the activities. She married 5 times, divorcing 4 of them and the other reportedly died of alcoholism although many speculate that Josie poisoned them. During her marriage to Carl McKnight, Josie gave birth to two sons: Crawford McKnight and Herbert "Chick" McKnight.

In 1913, Josie Bassett moved from her father's ranch to a new homestead in Utah. Here she built a new ranch and made it her lifetime commitment. In 1924, her son Crawford helped her build a new cabin on this property.

During the Great Depression, she supplied food to others in the area, particularly with supplies of beef. She made her own soap, sewed her own clothing, and became known for her prowess at hunting deer, which she often did for her own family and for less fortunate neighbors.

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In one instance, a game warden stopped by her cabin announcing that he was there to arrest her for poaching. She confessed that she had just killed a deer and took him to the carcass. The game warden was joking with her and took no action.

During the Prohibition years, Josie made and sold bootlegged whiskey but she never was arrested. Years after Prohibition, she continued to make her own brandy and whiskey until she was finally warned that revenue agents were looking for her still.

In 1936, rancher and former adversary Jim Robinson accused her of butchering his cattle and selling it in town. Six other ranchers joined in on the accusations. Hides from the carcasses were found on her property. Bassett was arrested.

She claimed the evidence was planted. Several neighbors supplied her with bail money until her trial. She was tried twice, each ending in a hung jury. After the second trial, the local prosecutor dropped the charges.



In 1945, she fell victim to a land scheme and lost most of her land. However, she lived frugally in her cabin and supported herself well into her 80s.

Last Days Later in Josie's life, she began to tell stories of her days with the outlaws. This captivated many as she was the last link to a time that

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many romanticized. She spoke of Butch Cassidy's Wild Bunch who had become infamous by the 1960s.

In 1963, she fell when a horse knocked her down which resulted in her breaking her hip.

A few months later, at the age of 90, Josie Bassett died.

By Russell Yost

The West

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7/27/23, 9:33 PM Josie Bassett Morris - Dinosaur National Monument (U.S. National Park Service)

National Park Service

Dinosaur National Monument CO, UT

NPS.gov (<https://www.nps.gov/>) / Park Home (<https://www.nps.gov/dino/index.htm>) / Learn About the Park (<https://www.nps.gov/dino/learn/index.htm>) / History & Culture (<https://www.nps.gov/dino/learn/historyculture/index.htm>) / People (<https://www.nps.gov/dino/learn/historyculture/people.htm>) / Josie Bassett Morris

Josie Bassett Morris

Wild and dangerous, romantic and adventurous, the American West is for most people today an almost mythological world, one separated from ours by time, technology, and civilization. Yet, for Josie Bassett Morris, the Wild West was a stark reality. Josie lived most of her 90 years in this austere yet beautiful landscape, when people depended on the bounty of the land for survival and "neighbors" for companionship.

As a child in Brown's Park, Josie contributed her part of the household and ranch chores. Once these duties were complete, young Josie was free to play in

the surrounding wilderness with her four siblings. The children grew up with an intimacy and dependence on the natural environment, forming values based on hard work and resourcefulness. Josie's family hosted many guests in their home, which fostered in Josie a strong sense of hospitality, generosity and community. Sometimes these dinner guests included outlaws like Butch Cassidy.

The women of Josie's family were not only pioneers of the west, but also represented a progressive style of womanhood. Josie married five times, and she divorced four husbands in a time when divorce was almost unheard of. For this, Josie's strong will, charm, and independence, garnered rumors about her throughout most of her life. However, Josie was universally admired for living such a remote and rugged lifestyle. Women were respected if they could work alongside the cowhands and run an efficient ranch in addition to being feminine.

In 1913 Josie decided to homestead in Cub Creek. Here she built a cabin and lived on the homestead for over 50 years. For a time, Josie shared her home with her son Crawford and his wife; grandchildren spent summers working and playing alongside Josie.

Raised on the frontier, Josie lived into the modern era of electronics. For friends and acquaintances in the 1950s, Josie was a link to a world past. During Prohibition in the 1920s and into the 1930s, Josie brewed apricot brandy and chokecherry wine. After a lifetime of dressing in skirts, she switched to wearing pants in her later years. She was tried and acquitted twice for cattle rustling when she was in her 60s. At the age of 71, in an ambitious move to revive a profitable cattle business, she deeded her land away and lost all but the five acres where her cabin still

<https://home.nps.gov/dino/learn/historyculture/josiebassettmorris.htm> 1/2

7/27/23, 9:33 PM Josie Bassett Morris - Dinosaur National Monument (U.S. National Park Service)

stands. In December of 1963 the legendary Josie suffered a broken hip while in her cabin; she died of complications in May of 1964.

Visit Josie's cabin (<https://www.nps.gov/dino/learn/historyculture/josie-morris-cabin.htm>)

Printable brochure (;)

Last updated: July 15, 2021

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<https://home.nps.gov/dino/learn/historyculture/josiebassettmorris.htm> 2/2

7/27/23, 9:31 PM Josie Bassett Morris Ranch Complex - Wikipedia

Josie Bassett Morris Ranch Complex Coordinates: 40°25 31 N 109°10 29 W

The Josie Bassett Morris Ranch Complex comprises a Morris, Josie Bassett, Ranch small complex of buildings in what is now Dinosaur National Monument in northeastern Uintah County, Utah, United Complex States. The complex is listed as a historic district on the U.S. National Register of Historic National Register of Historic Places. It is where Josie Bassett Places Morris, a small-time rancher and occasional accused stock thief, lived until 1963. The ranch, located in Browns Park, U.S. Historic district Colorado, was established by the Bassett family in the 1870s. Josie grew up there, and through her family came to know a number of outlaws, including Butch Cassidy, who frequented the area. Morris established her own homestead on Cub Creek in Utah in 1914 with help from friends Fred McKnight and the Chew family.[2]

Josie Bassett Morris Josie Morris Cabin, October 2010 The Bassett family moved west from Arkansas around 1877 to establish a homestead in the west, taking their three-year-old daughter Josie. Comparatively wealthy and educated for homesteaders, they established a ranch in the Brown's Park region near the Colorado-Wyoming border. Josie married Jim McKnight at the age of 19 in 1893. In 1914 Josie and husband M.B. (Ben) Morris, without much money, established a homestead claim at Cub Creek near Split Mountain, 40 miles from the family ranch. Her son Crawford and his wife lived there for a time, and grandchildren visited.[3]

Morris was a colorful local character, married five times and divorcing four of her husbands, and living in the cabin for over fifty years until she fell on ice and broke her hip in 1963. She died the following year at the age of 90. She was tried and acquitted for cattle rustling in her 60s and made brandy and wine from local fruit and berries during Prohibition.[4] Show map of Utah Show map of the United States Ranch Show all Location Dinosaur The ranch house started as a low square log cabin, with a National kitchen added later. The house is surrounded by dependent Monument structures, such as a chicken house, outhouse, root cellar, Uintah County, sheds and a small barn. A bridge provided access to the root Utah cellar, located across the creek.[2] United States

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josie\\_Bassett\\_Morris\\_Ranch\\_Complex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josie_Bassett_Morris_Ranch_Complex) 1/2

7/27/23, 9:31 PM Josie Bassett Morris Ranch Complex - Wikipedia

The Morris ranch complex was placed on the National Register Coordinates 40°25 31 N of Historic Places on December 19, 1986.[1] The National Park 109°10 29 W Service maintains an interpretive display at the site. Area 80 acres (32 ha) Built by Morris, Josie See also Bassett MPS Dinosaur National Register of Historic Places National portal Monument MRA (<https://npgallery> List of National Historic Landmarks in Utah [y.nps.gov/NRH](https://nps.gov/NRH) National Register of Historic Places listings in Uintah P/GetAsset/NRH County, Utah P/64000073\_text t) References NRHP reference No. 86003394 (<https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP>). National Register of Historic

Places. gov/AssetDetail/ National Park Service. July 9, 2010. NRIS/8600339  
 2. Mehls, Steven F. (May 15, 1985). "Classified Structure 4)[1] Field Report:  
 Josie Basset Morris Cabin" ([https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NRHP/86003394\\_text](https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NRHP/86003394_text)). Retrieved 1986 7 November 2011. 3. "Josie Bassett Morris Homestead" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120425145844/http://www.dinoland.com/Josie-Bassett-Morris-Homestead>). Northeastern Utah Travel Board. Archived from the original (<http://www.dinoland.com/Josie-Bassett-Morris-Homestead>) on 25 April 2012. Retrieved 7 November 2011. 4. "Josie Bassett Morris" (<http://www.nps.gov/dino/historyculture/josiebassettmorris.htm>). Dinosaur National Monument. National Park Service. Retrieved 7 November 2011.

External links Josie Bassett Morris (<http://www.nps.gov/dino/historyculture/josiebassettmorris.htm>) at Dinosaur National Monument Josie Morris Cabin (<http://www.nps.gov/dino/historyculture/josie-morris-cabin.htm>) at Dinosaur National Monument

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7/27/23, 9:34 PM Josie Morris Cabin - Dinosaur National Monument (U.S. National Park Service)

National Park Service

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Josie Morris Cabin

Today Josie's cabin would be considered a modest structure. It is hard to imagine this place as a hub of activity, a site where one individual poured heart and soul into endless hours of chopping wood, cooking meals, milking cows, entertaining guests, and tending the chicken coop and vegetable garden. Look closer at the walls and envision a bed where Josie slept through bitter cold nights. Breathe in and imagine the rich aroma of Josie's homebrewed coffee and homemade biscuits. Envision how it would have been to be a guest at the generous hostess' table. Take a moment to sit in the shade of the trees surrounding Josie's cabin – trees she carefully planted to provide the shade and fruit necessary for survival in a harsh environment. Walk the short trails into Box Canyon and Hog Canyon, where Josie penned her livestock; the wooden fence still stands. Imagine living in this place without plumbing, electricity, or neighbors for over fifty years. Relax and let the stillness enchant you; it is this same peacefulness that Josie may also have felt here.

Learn more about Josie Bassett Morris. (<https://www.nps.gov/dino/historyculture/josiebassettmorris.htm>)

Printable brochure (<https://www.nps.gov/dino/planyourvisit/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=>

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Last updated: February 24, 2015

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7/27/23, 9:29 PM Pioneers and Cowboys The Wayback Machine - [https://web.archive.org/web/20110621215910/http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah\\_chapters/pioneers\\_and\\_cowboys](https://web.archive.org/web/20110621215910/http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters/pioneers_and_cowboys)  
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Just Who Was The Outlaw Queen Etta Place? W. Paul Reeve History Blazer, May 1995

According to legend, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (Harry Longabaugh) infamous Utah outlaws noted throughout the West for their daring train, bank, and payroll heists, had a variety of female companions- -but none quite as mysterious as the wild and sophisticated Etta Place. Some say she was a native of eastern Utah and grew up in the Castle Gate- Price region. Others claim she was born in New York or Pennsylvania. Separating facts from legend is nearly impossible, making Place the true "mystery woman" of the notorious "Wild Bunch." That is until Doris Karren Burton, a worker at the Outlaw Trail History Center at the Uintah County Library, instigated a series of computer photograph analyses of Place that she published in 1992. The results linked Place to another colorful figure with ties to Utah's past: Ann Bassett, the so-called Queen of the Cattle Rustlers. Burton's fascinating research and the Bassett-Place connection illuminate the little known female side of Utah's turn-of-the-century outlaws.

The story unfolds in a rugged area on the Green River known as Brown's Park (also called Brown's Hole). Cut by impassable canyons and unfordable rivers, gulches, and gullies, Brown's Park not only offered an ideal hideout to fugitives but also provided excellent winter and summer range for stolen stock. The region was, in fact, used as such by the Wild Bunch on several occasions, and even the permanent residents of Brown's Park did their share of rustling. Ann

Bassett was no different; she spent much of her life as a rancher in Brown's Park, and there she met and forged a friendship with Cassidy and Sundance.

Closer scrutiny of Ann's life reveals that perhaps she was more than a friend to the two outlaws. Events suggest parallels too numerous to be coincidental between her and Etta Place, the cryptic outlaw companion of the Wild Bunch. Pinkerton National Detective Agency records give a physical description of Place that matches Bassett almost identically. Moreover, both women were noted for their classic good looks, intelligence, expert horsemanship, prowess with guns, and reputations as "loose" ladies. Adding to the likelihood that the two women were actually the same person is the fact that soon after each of Bassett's disappearances from Brown's Park, Place turned up with Cassidy and Sundance.

Ann Bassett was born in Brown's Park on May 25, 1878, to Herb and Elizabeth Bassett and experienced a childhood filled with every aspect of ranch life, including horse riding, calf roping, and a large dose of wild freedom. In 1894, two years after her mother's death, Ann's father enrolled her in St. Mary's Catholic School in Salt Lake City in an attempt to curb her wild side. After only a year the nuns asked the uncontrollable Ann to leave, and she returned to Brown's Park. During one of Cassidy's visits to the region he developed a close relationship with Ann, and it was likely during the winter of 1896-97 that she first used the alias Etta Place. That winter Place turned up in Emery County as Cassidy's companion. Apparently the lovers shared a cabin at Robber's Roost, the famous outlaw

[https://web.archive.org/web/20110621215910/http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah\\_chapters/pioneers\\_and\\_cowboys/1/2](https://web.archive.org/web/20110621215910/http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters/pioneers_and_cowboys/1/2)

7/27/23, 9:29 PM Pioneers and Cowboys hideout in southeastern Utah, with Elzy Lay and his new bride, Maude Davis, and other gang members.

Upon returning home, Ann took to cattle rustling and sabotage to defend her family's holdings against the Two-Bar Ranch, a large cattle company vying for control of Brown's Park. Meanwhile, the Wild Bunch left Utah and congregated in Texas in the fall of 1900. A few months later Ann left Brown's Park and Etta Place turned up in Texas. A February 2, 1901, article in the Vernal Express noted that "Miss Annie Bassett left on this morning's stage for Texas." Again, using the alias Etta Place, Bassett met Cassidy and Sundance, this time as a companion of the latter, and the trio journeyed to New York and then sailed to South America. Pinkerton records indicate that Place and Sundance returned to the U.S. in July 1902. Six months later Ann reappeared in Vernal, and the newspaper reported that she had been "traveling" for two years.

Mysteriously, news of Etta Place largely disappeared after a few more rendezvous in the early 20th century with Sundance, and possibly Cassidy, south of the border. Ann married Frank Willis, a cowboy and prospector, in 1923 and eventually settled in the small southwestern Utah town of Leeds where she died in 1956. To fulfill her wish to have her cremated remains scattered in her beloved Brown's Park, Frank drove there but "didn't have the heart to throw

Ann out." Her ashes remained in the trunk of his car until he died in 1963. Family members then buried Ann's ashes at an unmarked location in Brown's Park.

Perhaps the historical evidence suggesting that Bassett and Place were the same person is purely coincidental, but when surviving photographs of each are factored in the results seem indisputable. Doris Burton, with the help of Bill Webb, a member of the Outlaw Trail History Association, researched the historical similarities between the two women and sent pictures of each woman to Dr. Thomas G. Kyle of the Computer Research Group at Los Alamos National Laboratory. He had previously performed many such comparisons for government intelligence agencies. Using the computer to bring out characteristics too dim for the eye to recognize, Kyle ran a series of tests on the physical features of the two women. He concluded that there was only a 1 in 5,000 chance that the two women were different people. He was ready to remove the photos from his screen when he noticed something unusual he had somehow overlooked. A tiny elongated area at the top center of Ann's forehead seemed to be missing hair. Kyle had mistaken the spot for a part but upon further examination believed it to be a scar or unusual cowlick. He then zoomed in on Etta's head and found the same defect. He concluded: "The fact that the two women match in all their features and have this same defect removes all reasonable doubt that the two are the same person." Ann Bassett, Queen of the Cattle Rustlers, was Etta Place, queen of the outlaws. Sources: D. K. Burton, Queen Ann Bassett Alias Etta Place (Vernal, 1992); Debbie Spafford, "Ann Bassett, Queen of the Cattle Rustlers," Outlaw Trail Journal, Winter/Spring 1992; Wallace Stegner, Mormon Country (New York, 1970).

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7/27/23, 9:27 PM Prairie Rose Publications: Bad Girls, Bad Girls, Part 3, the Bassett Sisters of Brown's Park

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2018 ONLY 99 CENTS Under A Western Sky: Western Bad Girls, Bad Girls, Part 3, the Bassett Sisters of Brown's Park Historical Romance Boxed Set

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FOLLOWERS Ann Bassett Followers (110) Next

"Throwing caution to the winds, I pushed cattle off the range. I had to work alone. My neighbors did not support me in this, my challenge to Haley, and defiance of law and order. No other stockmen were responsible for what I did. I turned the heat against myself by an open declaration of war."--Ann Bassett on going to war with Two-Bar Ranch owner, Ora Haley, in revenge for the murder of her fiance, Matt Rash.

"Let's just say some men are harder to get rid of than others." --Josie Bassett on the suspected death by poisoning of her fifth and last husband.

"Why hasn't a mini-series been made about these people yet?"--Me Follow

In the second part of this series on the wild women, we saw how a certain place in combination with an event could take things in unexpected directions. The devastating winter PRAIRIE ROSE PUBLICATIONS of 1887 changed cattle ranching forever, putting a lot of cowboys out of work. Some of those cowboys ended up mixing with outlaws in Knickerbocker, Texas, spawning a new generation of outlaws. In case you missed the post about Laura Bullion here it is again: <https://prairierosepublications.blogspot.com/2018/08/bad-girls-bad-girls-part-ii-laura.html>

WELCOME TO PRAIRIE ROSE Likewise, in the story of the Bassett sisters, place and event combine to create a page in PUBLICATIONS outlaw history. The place: Brown's Park. The event: conflict between the large, wealthy PRP is a publishing company devoted ranchers and the homesteaders. to publishing westerns and western Brown's Park, or Brown's Hole as it originally was called, is an isolated mountain valley romances written by women. spanning Utah and Colorado. Difficult to penetrate by the law the area remained one of last <https://prairierosepublications.blogspot.com/2018/09/bad-girls-bad-girls-part-3-bassett.html> 1/12

7/27/23, 9:27 PM Prairie Rose Publications: Bad Girls, Bad Girls, Part 3, the Bassett Sisters of Brown's Park pockets of lawlessness at the end of the 19th century. PRAIRIE ROSE PUBLICATIONS was opened in August, 2013, by LIVIA J. WASHBURN and CHERYL PIERSON, two authors who saw a need for such an imprint. Usually, when people think "westerns" they think of male authors and male readers—but that's not true in today's world. Many women are just as interested in reading—and writing— westerns as their male counterparts; and of course, western romance has always been popular among the ladies!

LINKS Prairie Rose Publications Website

The Bassett Ranch (Photo Credit State of Utah Historical Society) WRITE A REVIEW It was here that Herb Bassett, his wife Elizabeth, and their two children Samuel and Josie while on their way from their home in Arkansas to a new life in California, decided to settle rather than continue west. Their daughter Ann was the first white person born in the valley. The baby was put in the care of an Indian tribe when Elizabeth couldn't breastfeed her. Ann liked



to claim she was part Indian. And, wild she was. When I first thought about doing this series on the women of the Wild Bunch, I saved the Bassett girls for last, because I wondered how wild two women who went to boarding schools out east could be? As it turns out on a scale of tame to wild, the Bassetts were near-feral. Their father sent them to boarding school in an attempt to control them. In school Ann seemed to have spent more time in prohibition than not. Both sisters preferred the cowboy life and returned to the family ranch. At this time cattle rustling between neighboring ranches was the norm. Herb had health problems and preferred to spend time in his library or playing piano, and he also acted as post master for the area. His wife, Elizabeth, stepped up to run the day to day activities of the ranch. The southern belle who rode sidesaddle was one tough customer. She had to be to protect their home. She was someone who not only knew where the bodies were buried, she likely had a hand in placing them there (...That time three Texans disappeared and the ranch acquired three new shotguns...). These were violent times, which she met by forming the Bassett Gang with her ranch hands Matt Rash, Isom Dart, and Jim McKnight.

Isom Dart, close friend and supporter of the Bassett Family

<https://prairierosepublications.blogspot.com/2018/09/bad-girls-bad-girls-part-3-bassett.html> 2/12

7/27/23, 9:27 PM Prairie Rose Publications: Bad Girls, Bad Girls, Part 3, the Bassett Sisters of Brown's Park Elizabeth was a feminist and raised her daughters without the usual restrictions of gender. The girls were a match for any man in roping, shooting, and riding. When Elizabeth died suddenly in her thirties, her offspring well-able to take over the reins, which included cattle rustling. The larger ranchers set out to eliminate the troublesome smaller holdings. They enlisted the notorious Tom Horn to act for them. When I saw he was involved, I worried about everyone in the valley (Horn was later hung for the cold-blooded murder of a 14 year old boy. Bragging about it was what got him arrested). Horn moved around under a fake name, pinning notes to the cabins of the small sheep and cattle farmers, and invited them to leave--or else. Here is where the outlaws come into the picture. Besides having a natural hideout in the wild valley, the small ranchers welcomed the gangs and the protection as well as the money they spent on horses and provisions. In addition, the ranchers saw the outlaws plaguing the railroad and banks as kindred spirits as they themselves were David to the Goliath of the wealthy ranchers. Rumor had it that the Bassett family was left alone due to Kid Curry threatening anyone who went after them. The valley was so popular with gangs that the Bassett Ranch was often the final destination of letters left along the secret postal system dotting the outlaw trail. Messages would be left in designated spots like hollow tree stumps so passing outlaws could pick up the "mail" and deliver it to Brown's Park where everyone was likely to end up. The family's ranch was a favorite spot to cool their heels. Butch Cassidy was said to enjoy Herb's library and the musical nights. It didn't hurt that the Bassetts had two beautiful daughters.

With all the handsome cowboys and outlaws passing through, Ann and Josie enjoyed an active love life. They had romantic relationship with several of the Wild Bunch outlaws. Their relationships were so complex I made a chart for you, which is easier than trying to go into details:

Love Connections among the Wild Bunch. (dotted line denotes a possible)

Both girls were romantically involved with Butch Cassidy, though not at the same time. Ann began an on again, off again affair with Cassidy that spanned seven years, beginning when she was 15. She was one of only five women allowed into Robber' Roost where she stayed with Cassidy for a few months along with Elzy Lay and his girlfriend. But, the sisters didn't limit their attentions to the Wild Bunch. Ann became engaged to Matt Rash, who was the nephew of Davy Crockett. Sadly, before they could marry Tom Horn shot Rash in the back while he was eating his lunch in his cabin where he was found dead. Not long after Isom Dart was shot and killed from a distance when he stepped out of his cabin.

<https://prairierosepublications.blogspot.com/2018/09/bad-girls-bad-girls-part-3-bassett.html> 3/12

7/27/23, 9:27 PM Prairie Rose Publications: Bad Girls, Bad Girls, Part 3, the Bassett Sisters of Brown's Park

Matt Rash

After the murders, Ann focused her energy on revenge. She spent the following years stealing Two-Bar cattle, running them off cliffs or drowning them when she couldn't, and sabotaging the other ranch's water supply. She was so successful she earned the nickname Queen Ann. She bought her own cabin and became one of the frontier's first female ranch owners. She was so determined to bring down the Two-Bar that she went so far as to steal away the foreman of the rival ranch, by marrying him to help him run her own ranch. Hyrum "Hi" Bernard was twenty years her senior. The marriage lasted six years and did little to deter Haley. After her divorce, Ann continued to run her ranch by herself. When a stock detective found butchered cattle belonging to the Two-Bar, Ann was arrested for rustling. The opera house was used to hold her trial to accommodate the crowd. One witness was killed and another disappeared, and Ann was acquitted to the delight of the residents who hated Haley. Ann was paraded through town in triumph. As for the suggestion that Ann Bassett and Etta Place were the same woman, after reading about Ann, I'd say she was far too busy at Brown's Park to run off to South America. Part One, in case you missed it: <https://prairierosepublications.blogspot.com/2018/07/bad-girls-bad-girls-whatcha-gonna-do.html> Meanwhile back at the ranch, Josie found herself pregnant by six foot tall, Scotsman Jim McKnight (It's a wonder this didn't happen more often) and they married. She had two sons by him before running him off with a frying pan (or shotgun, in some versions) when she couldn't tolerate his drinking. They say Josie, who stayed on her father's ranch, was the more domestic of the two sisters. Maybe. She sure liked getting married. She had five husbands, divorcing four and surviving one. Ann remarried in 1928

to cattleman Frank Willis. They moved to Utah where they went on to live a happy life. He doted on her and after she died of a heart attack at age 77 in 1956, unable to part with her, he carried around her ashes in his car until his death 1963. She wanted her ashes spread in Brown's Park and finally got her wish upon his death.

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Ann Bassett Willis in later life

When Josie's last husband died and traces of strychnine poison were found in his drinking cup, she was arrested for his murder. Josie was acquitted and swore off men. Donning bib overalls, she lived alone without electricity in a cabin that her son helped her build. She enjoyed hunting and fishing and living off the land like a homesteader with a herd of cattle penned in a nearby box canyon.

Cabin of Josie Bassett

Continuing alone, she remained a presence in Brown's Park into the next decades. During the Great Depression she helped out less fortunate neighbors. During Prohibition she made bootleg whiskey. She was arrested in 1936 for cattle rustling, but played her I'm-just-a grandma card and was acquitted. In 1963 she fell and broke her hip which led to her death at 90 years old.

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Josie Bassett McKnight Ranney Williams Wells Morris

One more thing: Josie said Butch Cassidy visited her in Brown's Park decades after his supposed death in Bolivia. She said they stayed up all night reminiscing.\* There is a lot more to say about these fascinating women and Brown's Park, and I hope I whetted your appetite to read more about them. I couldn't fit all the stories into one blog post. So, what do you think? Mini series? Who would you like to see playing all of these characters?

\*Josie wasn't the only one who claimed to have seen Butch long after his supposed death in Bolivia. Several of his former girlfriends and acquaintances made the same claim. His own sister, Lulu Parker Betenson, said he visited his family and told her he'd just come from visiting Sundance and Etta in New Mexico (I threw that in for you romantics out there). Lulu claimed he died much later under an assumed name, and both his grave and the name he was buried under are Parker family secrets as they don't want him disturbed. Ann Bassett also claimed to have paid a visit to Butch's grave in Utah decades after the Bolivian

incident. It is interesting to note that Alan Pinkerton of the famed detective agency who'd been hot on Butch and Sundance's trail didn't believe Butch died in Bolivia and didn't close the case until 1920. No evidence has ever been found that Butch and Sundance were killed in that shootout. If such a shootout even occurred. The story of their death was told by a friend of Cassidy's who owed him a favor.

Thank you for reading along with me on my series featuring these fascinating women: Etta Place, Laura Bullion, and the Bassett sisters whose tales are all so different from one another. For a bonus I'm throwing in photos shot from the interior of Butch and Sundance's Hole-in-the-Wall cabin. Yes! I stood inside their cabin!!! The cabin, along with other historic buildings from the old west, now stands in Old Trail Town, Cody, WY. I will sneak in my own vacation pics whenever I get a chance.

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The Bassett sisters: wild women of the Wild West Posted Friday, March 12, 2010 12:00 am

Dee Kirby

Ann Bassett and sister, Josie, who shared romantic interests with Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid and other members of the outlaw gang known as the Wild Bunch, would be ranchers who fought against the powerful cattlemen's associations.

The sisters, born to Herb and Elizabeth Bassett in the late 1870s, grew-up near Brown's Park, an isolated mountain valley along the Green River in Moffat County and Daguerre

Intelligent and attractive, the girls were taught to ride horses, rope and shoot by their father and they received an excellent education from boarding schools. Their mother, ranch, taught them how to operate and manage a ranch with toughness. However, Ann's father thought she needed further refinement, so he sent her to St. Mary's Catholic School in Salt Lake City, to help tame her wild side. The nuns sent the hot untamed Ann home.

The Bassetts operated a profitable ranch amidst cattle barons and outlaws, who found Brown's Park (also called Brown's Hole) an ideal hideout with excellent grazing land. A practical man, Herb regularly did business with the outlaws by

selling to them supplies such as horses and beef. His clients included infamous outlaws such as Butch Cass Black Jack Ketchum. Through these associations, Ann and Josie became well acquainted with the outlaws.

Romance for Ann began at age 15 with Butch Cassidy, while Josie engaged in a relationship with Elzy Lay, Cassidy's closest friend. Later, their affections switched when Ann with outlaw, Ben Kilpatrick, which was when Josie had a brief fling with Cassidy. Grown tired of those relationships, Ann returned to Cassidy, Josie snuggled with Will "News" Lay began a new relationship with Maude Davis. As they traded lovers, there appeared to be no animosity for apparently that was just the way it was.

The sisters' relationships with the outlaws positioned them to seek help from the Wild Bunch in dealing with a group of cattle barons, who attempted to purchase the Basse When the Bassetts refused their offer, the cattlemen used their power to intimidate the sisters by rustling the cattle. Led by Ann, who took up her mother's feud against the sisters struck back by rustling the cattle of the wealthy cattlemen in turn. Fear of retaliation from the outlaws stopped the cattlemen's harassment of the sisters to sell their ranch. Ann's aggression earned her the title, "Queen of the Cattle Rustlers

In 1903, Ann married Henry Bernard, manager of the Two Bar ranch, a large cattle company that sought control of Brown's Park. Bernard was promptly fired as Two Bar mana led Ann to close off a water hole that the Two Bar ranch depended upon for cattle. Shortly thereafter, Ann was caught rustling cattle from the Two Bar ranch. She was tried and acquitted of the accusation. After six years, her marriage ended in divorce. She w Frank Wallis in 1928. They spent the rest of their lives on their ranch in Utah. Ann died at age 78, in 1956.

Josie married and divorced four times. Her fifth husband reportedly died of alcoholism, but rumors persisted that she poisoned him. She had two sons from her marriage to 1913, she settled on a homestead in Vernal, Utah, where she committed her life to ranching. Her son Crawford helped her build a new cabin on the property. During the depression, she supplied her own beef to neighbors as well as wild game, for she was a skilled hunter. She also made her own soap and sewed her own clothes. Prohibition, she bootlegged whiskey and continued to do so for years, thereafter, until she learned that revenue agents were searching for her still, which her son threatened

In 1936, rancher, Jim Robinson, backed by six other ranchers accused Josie of butchering his cattle and selling it. After hides of the carcasses were discovered on Josie's prop was arrested. She would remain free on bail by money supplied by neighbors. She claimed she was framed by people who wanted her ranch. Apparently, jurors believed Josie, for she was both ending in a hung jury. The case was dismissed.

In 1945, Josie would lose most of her ranch to a land scheme. At age 72 and still in her cabin, the resilient Josie adopted a frugal life and managed to support herself well in In 1963, Josie's hip was broken when a horse knocked her down.

A few months later, she died at the age of 90. She was remembered by her neighbors as an eccentric, feisty about her wild days with the Wild Bunch and claimed she last saw Butch Cassidy in the 1920s, after he was reported killed in South America.

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Posted in Utah Nature September 17, 2019 by Catherine Armstrong

Butch Cassidy And His Wild Bunch Were Connected With Utah Sisters Josie And Ann Bassett If the Beehive State's Wild West history fascinates you, then you probably know all about Butch Cassidy and his Wild Bunch, and the time they spent hiding out in Southern Utah. Cassidy is an infamous outlaw, but you might not know about the two sisters who were involved with him and his cohorts for years. Have you heard of Ann and Josie Bassett?

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Butch Cassidy and his Wild Bunch were famous. The notorious band of outlaws were particularly prolific at robbing trains, and they made headlines all over the world.

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From the studio of John Schwartz., Public Domain/Wikimedia

The gang famously hid out in Southern Utah. Very few people outside the gang were allowed to visit Robbers Roost, but two sisters from Utah were intimately involved with several of the men in the gang, and are believed to have been two of the five women ever allowed to know its location.

Josie and Ann Bassett grew up in Utah. Their father was a cattle rancher who did business with several Wild West outlaws, including Cassidy and his gang.

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Ann (pictured above) had the nickname "Queen Ann Bassett," and she was a fiercely independent frontierswoman. Ann's older sister Josie, was also a feisty woman who held her own with outlaws and lawmen alike.

Ann Bassett became Butch Cassidy's girlfriend at age 15, and she would remain involved with him and other members of the Wild Bunch for many years.

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Josie Bassett was involved with Wild Bunch member Elzy Lay, and also dated several others.

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Shown is Josie's cabin, where she lived as an independent woman for decades.

When local cattlemen began harassing the sisters to sell their ranch, they refused. The cowboys began rustling their cattle, but the sisters' relationships with the Wild Bunch came in handy.

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It's rumored that Kid Curry, one of the most notorious Wild Bunch criminals, paid some of the cattlemen a visit to "encourage" them to leave the sisters alone. It worked.

Josie also dated Butch Cassidy for awhile, and claims that he visited her at her cabin in 1930.

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Josie married five times and divorced four. It's rumored that she may have poisoned her fifth husband, who died unexpectedly. Later in life, Josie was known to local law enforcement as a poacher and bootlegger, but was never convicted of those crimes. She lived alone for decades until she broke her hip after falling off a horse at age 89. She died just a few months later.

Ann maintained a relationship with Cassidy and a few others in the gang until 1903.

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During the time that she associated with the gang, she supplied the men with horses and beef. At one point, she was arrested for cattle rustling, but was acquitted. Ann was married twice, and lived a law-abiding life after she married. She raised two sons and lived until she was 77. The Bassett Sisters were some of just a few people outside the Wild Bunch who really knew these men. Have you heard their stories before?

You can hike a trail that takes you through the territory where the Wild Bunch once roamed. Check out the Grand Wash trail.

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Winter 2017

Wild West Josie By Nicolas Brulliard

Did Josie Bassett Morris meet outlaw Butch Cassidy in a cabin that's now part of Dinosaur National Monument decades after his supposed death?

Almost a century ago, famed bank and train robbers Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid died in a shootout with army and police in a small southern Bolivia town. At least that's the version most commonly accepted and popularized by Hollywood. In the film, Cassidy, portrayed by Paul Newman, and his accomplice, played by Robert Redford, go out guns blazing, though the movie, which shows them crippled by bullet wounds, conveniently ends before their actual deaths.

But there's an alternative version of this story. In that one, decades after he was supposed to have died in Bolivia, Cassidy visited a small log cabin in what is now Dinosaur National Monument. There, he met Josie Bassett Morris, a longtime friend, love interest and a Wild West character in her own right. Morris had five husbands and divorced four of them — at a time when divorce was extremely rare, especially among the conservative Mormons of northern Utah and Colorado. She was suspected of murdering the fifth. A bootlegger and a poacher, she went to trial for allegedly stealing her neighbors' cattle.

Morris had known Cassidy and his “Wild Bunch” from the time they worked as cowhands on her parents’ ranch in Browns Park, Colorado. As the story goes, when Cassidy, accompanied by fellow outlaw William Ellsworth “Elzy” Lay, approached Morris at a saloon in Wyoming more than a decade after Cassidy’s presumed death, she had little doubt it was her old flame.

“Both, she said, were a little overweight, but she recognized them immediately, and they reminisced the whole night about old friends and old times,” said Kerry Ross Boren, an author who began writing books and articles about the West as a young man and interviewed Morris in 1960, when he was 19 and she was 86.

Of course, it’s impossible to know for sure that the meeting actually took place. Boren said he found Morris “very truthful” when he spoke to her 56 years ago, and that “she was never known to fabricate.” The owner of a hotel where she was staying at the time also confirmed the account, he said, and both Morris’ daughter-in-law and one of her old friends told Boren that Cassidy visited Morris at her cabin after that initial encounter. Still, no hard evidence remains, and by the time Morris allegedly reunited with Cassidy, he had attained the sort of legendary status that inspired fabricated tales and exaggerated accounts. Michael Rutter, author of the book “Wild Bunch Women” about the women who hung out with Cassidy’s gang, compared Morris’ purported meeting to an Elvis sighting. “You’ve got to take all of that with a grain of salt,” he said.

Born in Rockport, Arkansas, in 1874, Morris moved to Browns Park three years later with her parents. Her father, Herb Bassett, was a Civil War veteran who believed in education, and her mother, Elizabeth, was a petite, headstrong woman who ran the family’s ranch. And so Morris grew up both reading classics and performing “men’s chores” on the ranch. “Her parents kind of raised her that way, not to go against authority and things like that, but they raised her to be a very strong person,” said Dinosaur National Monument park ranger Barbara Tallman, who gives regular talks to visitors about Morris.

<https://www.npca.org/articles/1417-wild-west-josie> 1/5

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Browns Park was part of the Outlaw Trail, a string of remote hideouts in Wyoming, Colorado and Utah where fugitives went to escape the reach of the law. Cassidy, who loved to read, favored the Bassett ranch where he could take advantage of Herb’s extensive library. The ranch had another appeal: Josie and her sister, Anne, were among the area’s few eligible girls, Tallman said. Josie was about 15 when she first met Cassidy after a local horse race.

“I thought he was the most dashing and handsome man I had ever seen. I was such a young thing, and giddy as most teenagers are, and I looked upon Butch as my knight in shining armor,” she told Boren in that 1960 interview. “But he was more interested in his horse than he was in me, and I remember being very put out by that. I went home after being snubbed by him and stamped my foot

on the floor in frustration.”

That didn’t last. Morris recounted how she would later spend time with Cassidy in her parents’ hay loft, where she “didn’t let him get bored.” Yet Cassidy wasn’t the marrying kind, and Morris instead wed Jim MacKnight, with whom she had two sons. Two more husbands would follow. Then she married Emerson Wells, an alcoholic who often fought with her. One evening in 1913, Wells, feeling unwell, went to bed. The next morning, he was found dead, a small bottle with traces of poison next to him. The inquiry was short-lived. “She always said that if she really wanted to get rid of her husband she would just shoot him, because she was a very good shot,” Tallman said.

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Morris soon moved to a remote corner of northeastern Utah, where she built her own cabin and became a homesteader. There, she made apricot brandy — but didn’t drink any — and hunted deer. She also was accused of supplementing her diet with meat from her neighbors’ cows. Facing trial for cattle rustling, she eschewed her usual blue jeans in favor of a grandmotherly outfit. Asked by the judge if she had anything to say in her defense, she turned to the jury and asked, “Do I look like I could butcher anybody’s cattle?” She was acquitted. Boren, who dug up that anecdote, was able to answer that very question years later, when he found the octogenarian lifting a freshly slaughtered cow as he came up to her cabin.

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According to Morris’ version of events, Cassidy moved around the country until he died as an old man in Johnnie, Nevada, in the mid- 1940s. She herself made it to 90, when she died of complications from a broken hip. Her Utah cabin was incorporated a few years later into Dinosaur National Monument, where visitors can still find it today.

Morris and Cassidy’s romance might have survived them. “It was a common rumor in Browns Park,” Boren said, “that Crawford MacKnight, Josie’s son, was actually Butch’s child.” Boren said Morris and Cassidy have plenty of living descendants, so in theory the rumor could be verified through DNA testing. “But it would be very difficult getting them to agree to be tested,” he said. “These families are very closed.”

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicolas Brulliard Senior Editor Nicolas is a journalist and former geologist who

joined NPCA in November 2015. He writes and edits online content for NPCA and serves as senior editor of National Parks magazine.

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DINOSAUR UTAH Women of the Wild West: Josie Bassett Morris January 5, 2021 We learned about Josie Bassett Morris during our visit of Josie Morris Cabin in Dinosaur National Monument. This is her former homestead where she lived from 1914 to 1964. The park does provide some valuable insight into the homestead grounds and the life of Josie, but between you and me, it's a <https://discoverallcorners.com/josie-bassett-morris-wild-west/> 1/27

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watered-down version of what once was. (The NPS is keeping secrets, y'all! LOL) As I learned during my own research, there is SO MUCH MORE to the story of Josie Bassett Morris. Not only was Josie a fascinating character of the Old West, she left a legacy that earns a spot in women's history. In honor of Josie Bassett Morris, I'd love to share with you what I have found – let's keep her spirit alive! The early life of Josie Bassett Morris Josephine Bassett (Josie Bassett) was born January 17, 1874 in Rockport, Arkansas. She was the first child of Amos Herbert Bassett (Herb Bassett) and Mary Elizabeth Chamberlain Bassett (Elizabeth Bassett) who were both well-educated and lived a relatively comfortable life. (Interestingly, Elizabeth was only 16 years old back in 1871 when she married Herb, who was 37 at the time. One theory behind the age difference is that perhaps Elizabeth found in Herb the father she never had. She lost both parents at a very early age and was raised by her grandfather (together with her sister). Or, perhaps she was simply attracted to Herb because he was her polar opposite and allowed her spirit to shine through.)

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According to historical records, little Josie (Josephine) was only about 3 or 4 years old when the Bassett family had made the leap to follow a family member in moving to Brown's Park, Colorado (formerly known as Brown's Hole), situated right along the north end of the Utah/Colorado border. At first, the Bassett family may have been headed to California, but once they stopped in Brown's Park to meet with Herb's half-brother who had already moved here, they immediately fell in love. Well, one of them did. The other probably just played along. Elizabeth Bassett was overcome by the sheer beauty of Brown's Park. Imagine an expansive lush mountain valley with a river, well insulated by a vast rugged landscape. If any place was calling her name, this was certainly it! To put things into perspective, this took place sometime in the 1870s (most sources agree on 1877-ish). The Bassett family had two kids at that point – little Josie, and her younger brother Samuel. And, a third one on the way. Soon enough there were 5 kids in the Bassett family, three of which were born in the picturesque Brown's Park – Anna (Ann), Elbert, and George. Two girls and three boys altogether. Unfortunately, very little is known about the boys in the Bassett family, so I wasn't able to find out a whole lot about them. Most sources only mention the girls – Josie, and her younger sister, Ann. <https://discoverallcorners.com/josie-bassett-morris-wild-west/> 3/27

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As you can imagine, growing up on a ranch in the rugged Brown's Park only meant one thing – Josie's early years were everything but dull. Especially with the guidance of her mother, Elizabeth Bassett.

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Growing up in Brown's Park, Colorado Josie's mom, Mary Elizabeth (Chamberlain) Bassett (Elizabeth Bassett), was a dominant figure in the family who wasn't afraid to play hard, and work hard. Elizabeth Bassett was small in stature and always dressed in elegant tailored dresses. She was beautiful and charming, yet tough as a boot and larger than the life itself. Elizabeth ran the family ranch to her liking and did so very well. She was capable of doing all sorts of hard labor and made sure all kids, including the girls, were taught how to rope cattle, ride horses, and shoot, all at a very young age. I'm not sure about shooting guns, but by the age of 8, Josie could ride and rope with the best of them.

When another rancher's full-grown cow occasionally wandered onto the Bassett's property, Elizabeth would often kill it without hesitation in order to feed

her family, or she simply rebranded it and made it one of hers. If a stray  
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young calf happened by, Elizabeth Bassett didn't care where it came from. It was branded and added to her quickly-growing herd. This wasn't just a matter of survival. Technically, the cows were trespassing, and this was the Old West, after all. The kids' father, Amos Herbert Bassett (Herb Bassett), on the other hand, was noticeably more passive than his wife. He was more of a mild-mannered, musically inclined intellectual who loved to read. Suddenly finding himself living on the rugged Brown's Park frontier where manual labor was prized over academic aptitude must have been quite the challenge; one can only wonder how that settled with him. Still, even though Herb Bassett was the kind of guy to read Shakespeare to his kids, he was more than capable of building a cabin for his family. He even piped in water from a nearby spring. He pitched in wherever needed around the ranch but contently let the head of the Bassett gang, his wife Elizabeth, take the rein. Later on, Herb helped organize a small local school in Brown's Park and began working as a postmaster, which suited him much better than ranching.

Taking after their parents, both Josie and Ann were well educated. Both attended prominent boarding schools in their youth. Yet, they could ride and rope like only men (AND THEIR MOTHER) could. Both girls eventually returned to ranching when they were in their teens.

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It's small wonder that the Bassett girls grew up to be sharp-witted, strong, independent, and wild and spirited like their mother and the country around them. Everything I had read about them suggests that they were also unusually attractive. FUN FACT: The Bassett sisters were friends with them bad boys outlaws. Now this is where it gets interesting! Also, they both supposedly became romantically involved with some members of the Wild Bunch gang. I guess that's what happens when your parents build a home on the outlaw trail... Due to the isolation and ruggedness of Brown's Park (formerly Brown's Hole), outlaws who became familiar with the nooks and crannies far and wide used the area extensively to move goods and to hide. Hospitable by nature, the Bassett ranch welcomed all visitors – no questions asked. Nobody ever left hungry. Elizabeth Bassett was an articulate conversationalist and an excellent hostess who never tired of anyone entering their home. Thanks to Elizabeth's gregarious nature, the Bassett ranch quickly became a social center of Brown's Park and a popular stopover for travelers of all kinds. Peddlers, cowboys, prospectors, you name it, and even some of the well-known outlaws who frequented the remote mountain valley on the run from the law. Among



them Butch Cassidy, “Black Jack” Ketchum, Kid Curry, Elzy Lay, and Ben Kilpatrick. <https://discoverallcorners.com/josie-bassett-morris-wild-west/> 8/27

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Herb Bassett did business with many of the outlaws, supplying them with beef and horses. Besides coming for the necessities, Herb’s extensive library was yet another popular reason for the visitors to stop by. A rugged cowboy with his feet propped up, reading a piece from Herb’s personal collection, was a common sight on the Bassett ranch. In show of appreciation, the cowboys that drifted in and out often pitched in around the prospering ranch. The Bassett family, much like the rest of Brown’s Park residents, developed their own unique codes of ethics based on trust, and the Robin Hood principle, if you will, that fit within their lifestyle and beliefs. Basically, they didn’t question anybody’s way of living as long as everyone behaved well in Brown’s Park. While you could say that Brown’s Park operated outside of standard definitions of the law, the community strictly adhered to their own basic moral codes.

As it turns out, maintaining a friendly and respectful relationship with the outlaws was a true blessing that gave the Bassett family an extra protection in times of need. It just so happened that wealthy cattle barons sprung up interest in the Bassett’s land and didn’t hesitate to hire help to sweep up Bassett’s cattle and <https://discoverallcorners.com/josie-bassett-morris-wild-west/> 10/27

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to harass the family. Assaults like this carried on for years. The girls in the Bassett family certainly meant business when standing ground in defense of their holdings and weren’t easily intimidated, but I imagine having that kind of extended support must have been a much welcome respite. In December of 1892, Elizabeth Bassett (Josie’s mom) died suddenly at the age of 37, presumably of appendicitis. Even though untimely death wasn’t all that uncommon in the Old West, I imagine Elizabeth’s passing must have been a traumatic event for the entire family and their circle, as well as a significant blow to the ranch operation, given the extent of work she was capable to singlehandedly manage herself. Then, Josie Bassett got married. The following year after her mother’s death, Josie married James Fielding McKnight (Jim KcKnight). She was about 19 years old back then. Over the years they ended up having two boys – Crawford George McKnight (born 1893), and Amos Herbert McKnight – also known as “Chick” (born 1895). The marriage didn’t last. And so she married again. And again. And then supposedly two more times, but let’s not skip ahead. Josie Bassett was suspected of killing one of her husbands, Emmer-

son Wells, by strychnine poisoning, but I guess we'll never know. While I don't  
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condone foul play, according to sources close to Josie and Josie's own words, this one husband turned out to be an abusive aggressive binge drinker. Somebody may have laced his coffee with a squirt of strychnine, or perhaps he decided to end his own life...? His death remains shrouded in mystery, and maybe it's for the best.

It appears that Josie went on to live in several places some time after first getting married but may have returned to live back on the family ranch at least once. The records aren't clear on that. It wasn't until Josie Bassett Morris was nearly 40 years old when she had found a charming land in a lush valley in Cub Creek which is now part of Dinosaur National Monument. Cub Creek was located roughly 40 miles from the Bassett Ranch in Brown's Park. Related: 7 TOP Things to Do in Dinosaur National Monument, Utah In 1914, having little to no money, Josie filed a homestead claim here, and with the help of her son Crawford she built a modest cabin in the valley. Crawford and his wife lived here, too, but only briefly. Crawford's wife wasn't up for this way of living.

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10 years later, in 1924, Josie built a new cabin on the property, presumably all on her own. It is none other than the Josie Morris Cabin you get to see on the last stop on Dinosaur National Monument's scenic drive, right where the road ends.

Josie's cabin back in the day; date unknown. (Image courtesy of Uintah County Library Regional History Center)

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Josie's cabin today.

Sorting out through all kinds of contradictory information, I believe it was around the time Josie started homesteading in Cub Creek that she had met her last husband – Ben Morris. The marriage didn't last long though. The word is that Josie chased hubby Morris away with a frying pan prior to divorcing him just like the 3 others before him. Josie Bassett Morris crushed the female stereotypes of the Old West. Josie was outspoken and progressive, and living the pioneer life... well, her own way.

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For starters, her many marriages... Josie had married 5 times and divorced 4 husbands. All this in times when a single divorce was virtually unheard of and a complete social taboo. Besides re-marrying several times, Josie Bassett Morris managed to do other things that were uncommon and frowned upon when it came to women in that era. Like wearing pants and keeping her hair short, though not until she lived here in Cub Creek. Josie was far from being an attention seeker though. For her it was all about being practical. I guess there comes a point in your life when you say ENOUGH!!! after you're forced to cut your perfectly coiffed hair and a skirt out of a thorny bush. With an axe. Which Josie apparently had to do at least once during her life in Cub Creek, but I'm guessing probably several more times. Timeline-wise, this was around 1924/1925.

In addition, Josie Bassett Morris reportedly brewed and sold bootleg whiskey during the Prohibition years. It was a way to make money which allowed her to support her son and many others. She also supplied food to those in need during the Great Depression. Deer poaching and cattle rustling were sometimes involved in her efforts to make <https://discoverallcorners.com/josie-bassett-morris-wild-west/> 15/27

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ends meet, or just in general, but her motivation was never greed. It is true that Josie happened to care less about hunting seasons or hunting licenses, for which she tended to get in trouble.

Josie Bassett Morris in front of the Box Canyon, only a few steps away from her cabin; date unknown. (Image courtesy of Uintah County Library Regional History Center)

According to endless testimonies, Josie was always busy helping. Whether that meant feeding the hungry, providing monetary or other support, or putting a roof over someone's head. Even if that meant she herself had to sleep outside in a dug-out. Josie Bassett Morris was sharp-witted, too. I'm not the least bit surprised that when she was arrested at the age of 62 for butchering stolen cattle belonging to several other ranchers, she was acquitted after two trials, with all EVIDENCE IGNORED. <https://discoverallcorners.com/josie-bassett-morris-wild-west/> 16/27

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Why, you ask? You see, Josie was this sweet petite old lady. She dressed elegantly for the trials (instead of wearing her usual comfy denim overalls), even her hair was neatly put up for the occasion. Who could accuse a fragile-looking,

soft-spoken, sweet old grandma of cattle rustling and backyard butchering? (Well played, Josie. Well played.)

Josie Bassett Morris inside her cabin; ca. 1958. She is about 84 years old in this picture. (Image courtesy of Uintah County Library Regional History Center)

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Josie Bassett Morris was probably the last known source of information about the outlaws. Not only did she grow up with these guys, Josie supposedly had an affair with Butch Cassidy himself, though the sources aren't uniform on any particular details or time frame. Either way, that's her business and nobody else's, right? My point is, she knew these guys, and she knew them well. Romance or not, Josie and Butch Cassidy's outlaw gang were on really good terms with both of the Bassett girls. In their youth, Josie and her sister, Ann, were one of the very few women that were allowed into "Robbers Roost," one of the remote hideouts of the outlaws. Imagine all the little and big secrets she and Ann may have known. RUMOR HAS IT...

By several witness accounts as well as Josie's own words, Butch Cassidy himself supposedly visited Josie in 1920s or 30s, decades after he was rumored to have died in Bolivia. I'm not sure if he would have come to the cabin in Cub Creek, but this was certainly the time period during which Josie had been living here.

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For what it's worth, various claims made by others do support the theory that Butch Cassidy came back from South America and lived an honest life in the U.S. until passing away in Nevada, sometime in the mid-1940s. Josie Bassett Morris passed away May 28, 1964 at the age of 90 in Salt Lake County Hospital where she was taken due to complications of a broken hip she had suffered on the homestead. Some sources state that Josie passed away on May 1, but her death certificate states otherwise. By societal standards, Josie Bassett Morris spelled trouble. She ran a homestead entirely by herself, wore pants and short hair, butchered stolen cows and poached deer, swore off men, divorced a few husbands and may or may not have poisoned one, made illegal booze, and let's not forget the close bond with Butch Cassidy's gang back in the day. But she was also kind, generous, and loved by others. Dang, Josie, you were a badass little lady with a muscle, wit, and iron will. I would have loved to knock on your door for some coffee and a hearty chat! I bet you baked a mean pie, too. Josie Bassett Morris, in my book, you deserve nothing but respect! May your spirit shine as bright as the Utah sun. — In memory of Josie Bassett Morris / 1874–1964

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Josie Bassett Morris in Cub Creek (Image courtesy of Uintah County Library Regional History Center)

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